

# **EARLY NORTHWEST SEMITIC SERPENT SPELLS IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS**

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# **EARLY NORTHWEST SEMITIC SERPENT SPELLS IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS**

by  
**Richard C. Steiner**

**EISEN BRAUNS  
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IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS

by  
Richard C. Steiner

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## **Foreword**

### **AN EGYPTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

*Robert K. Ritner*

For the past twenty years when teaching Egyptian religious texts, I have invariably begun with Pyramid Text Spell 281 and its adjacent serpent spells, much to the consternation of the advanced Egyptology graduate students. Only the final passage is recognizably Egyptian in the seemingly “untranslatable” Spell 281. I have selected these texts to introduce the complexity of ancient religious corpora, which can utilize not only mythological precedents (“historiolae”) familiar to the ancient scribes though unknown to us, but also exotic “magical speech” indicative of divinely inspired glossolalia or imported religious compositions, tailored to Egyptian needs. I shall continue to employ Spell 281, but with a critical difference. The spell no longer seems untranslatable, and the non-Egyptian words now elucidate the surrounding mythic framework.

The relevant serpent spells comprise two series: Pyramid Text Spells 232 through 238 and 281 through 287. Physically separated in the pyramid of Unas, their earliest attestation, they are linked thematically both by the presence of exotic language and the distinctive 333-group, and by the virtual repetition in Spell 282 of the conclusion of Spell 238. The parallelism has long been noted, and the division of this group reflects the separation of the broader corpus of serpent spells between the liminal spaces that protect the king’s corpse (burial chamber) and that ensure his rebirth (antechamber). The separation could indicate the original independence of the embedded non-Egyptian material, but as redacted within the Egyptian framework, the spells form a coherent whole. The division of a religious composition into amuletic fragments is a well-known process of synecdoche or pars-par-toto, continued into medieval and modern times by the use of extracts and incipits of biblical texts in protective pendants or phylacteries. Within the Egyptian royal tombs of the New Kingdom, sections of the Amduat text were rearranged to provide a protective bulwark for the deceased king. A similar process certainly underlies the general placement of serpent spells in the

Pyramid Texts and may well apply more specifically to the linked spells under discussion here. Leaving aside the tremendous importance of the following volume for Semitic studies, what Richard Steiner has made possible for Egyptology is far more than a running translation of isolated anti-snake spells. It is quite likely that we can now reconstruct an entire Old Kingdom ritual against serpents.

The mythological argument, it seems to me, proceeds as follows.

Spell 232: The snake, designated as “Poison,” is commanded in Egyptian to come and take notice of the process, while reminded twice for emphasis that its mother is *ȝȝȝ* (Steiner’s *Rīr-Rīr*). The foreign nature of the *ȝȝȝ*-group can hardly be in doubt, as evidenced by Egyptian copyists’ inability to reproduce it consistently. The presence in Semitic of “mother snake” corresponds directly to the repeated Egyptian mention in this series of “his mother.”

Spell 233: Again in Egyptian, the serpent is commanded to fall down and crawl away.

Spell 234: The serpent is now informed specifically of what he has been told to come and see: the face of *ȝȝȝ* is watching him so that he should get down on his back and retreat before her. Up to this point, all mentions of the female *ȝȝȝ* are in the third person (“whose mother,” “a face,” “she who jubilates”).

Spells 235-236: Only then, after the snake has been presented with his mother via Egyptian, does she speak in her foreign language. The magical process thus moves logically from direct address to the snake in Egyptian, with mention of the presence of *ȝȝȝ*, to her non-Egyptian statements.

Spells 237-238: Following the conclusion of the Semitic spells, the text returns to Egyptian and states bluntly (and “performatively”) that the venom has “come to naught” and fled to its mother’s house, with phraseology reflecting the Semitic command in Spell 236 (“Come to my house”). Spell 238 completes the section by declaring that the snake’s attack has failed in its threat to the sun god. This Egyptian insertion between the two linked series with exotic language indicates that the Egyptian redactor clearly understood and structured a coherent historiola of events.

Spells 281–282 repeat the pattern, with Semitic spells followed by meaningful Egyptian statements of result (“go away” in 281) and even a repeat of the conclusion of Spell 238 that forms a parallel refrain (282) ending this section.

Precisely the same pattern emerges as the finale in Spells 286–287, where the Semitic is concluded by an Egyptian statement of fact (using the stative)

that the “Byblites are in a state of having slithered away.” The combined series ends with a clear trajectory from hostile beginning to a peaceful end, praising in Egyptian the female *333*, and in turn asking for praise from her toward the theoretical reciter (the king) (286). Although *333* was first mentioned in Spell 232 and speaks in 235, she is not directly addressed until this point. The combined ritual ends in Spell 287, which addresses the snake as a “retreating one” belonging to (and thus subject to) his mother, emphatically declares the snake to be a retreating one, and closely paraphrases the initial Semitic command of *333* in Spell 235: “O lion, be off!”

We have thus gone from a string of isolated invocations, many of them gibberish, to a coherent, logically constructed tripartite ritual with recognizable beginning, middle, and end. This seems to me a remarkable advance. Even if the Semitic parts were not recognized, the surrounding Egyptian pattern is clear now for the first time.

The Egyptian scribe is not just cobbling together a string of charms in this sequence, nor is the Egyptian author of the redacted ritual slavishly copying misunderstood Semitic spells. If Steiner is correct in identifying the “Byblite” snakes as intrusive pests, perhaps accompanying known timber shipments, then the rationale for the ritual and cultural adaptation is readily explicable. As with Asiatic-influenced disease spells examined by Steiner previously, the Egyptian author is consciously adopting a foreign means of dealing with a problem of foreign origin. There is no cultural “one-upmanship” here. At all periods of Egyptian history, Egypt was receptive to exterior cultural influences when useful. The great influx of Semitic products, terminology, and mythology in the New Kingdom hardly undermined the vitality of contemporary Egyptian culture, and there need be no fear that admission of a similar process in the Old Kingdom will lessen its cultural legitimacy. Vital cultures interact, as isolationist nations (such as early China and Japan) have discovered to their detriment. The evidence adduced by Steiner is to be celebrated not only by Semitists, but also by Egyptologists.



## Preface and Acknowledgments

לחשים בפְּרוֹטוּכָנְעִינִית (בכתבי הפירמידות: סקירה ראשונה על חולדות העברית באلف השלישי לפני הספרה הגדולה) and the second in English (“Proto-Canaanite Spells in the Pyramid Texts: A First Look at the Ancestor of Phoenician and Hebrew in the Third Millennium B.C.E.”). The Hebrew lecture was delivered in Jerusalem on January 22, 2007 at an open session of the Academy of the Hebrew Language held in cooperation with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the World Congress of Jewish Studies. It was posted the following day on the Web site of the Academy and subsequently published with minor revisions in *Lešonenu* 70 (2008) 15–27 (English summary pp. vii–viii), under the title “לחשים בקדם-כָּנְעִינִית בכתבי הפירמידות: סקירה ראשונה של חולדות העברית באلف השלישי לפני הספרה הגדולה”. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Moshe Bar-Asher, President of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, for convening this special session together with the presidents of the other two sponsoring organizations, Prof. Menachem Magidor and Prof. Sara Japhet. I would also like to thank Prof. Joshua Blau, Past President of the Academy, for graciously agreeing to serve as respondent for the lecture. Prof. Blau’s remarks are published in *Lešonenu* 71 (2009) 425–28, under the title “לחשים בקדם-כָּנְעִינִית בכתבי הפירמידות”. Before the lecture, I received helpful advice from Profs. Blau, David Berger, and S. Z. Leiman, for which I am most grateful.

The English lecture was delivered at the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Semitic Philology Workshop on April 3, 2008, at the invitation of Prof. John Huehnergard. I am indebted to him for that invitation and for the subsequent invitation to publish this monograph in *Harvard Semitic Studies*. These invitations came with an irresistible “signing bonus”: invaluable detailed comments from Prof. Huehnergard himself (once before the lecture and a second time before publication) and from his co-editor, Prof. W. Randall Garr. I am very grateful to them and to Profs. Agustinus Gianto, Leonid Kogan, and Aaron Koller, who also read and commented on drafts of this work.

Special mention must be made of three eminent Egyptologists who did their best to make my lack of Egyptological training less evident. Prof. Robert K. Ritner’s role in initiating this research project in 2002 is recounted in chapters 1 and 2 below. In 2007, his interest in the project was rekindled, and from that time

on he has contributed an enormous amount to this project, as will be obvious from the footnotes. My own interest in the project was reignited a year or two earlier by the publication of a stimulating new translation of the Pyramid Texts by the doyen of Pyramid Text specialists, Prof. James P. Allen. On the advice of a prominent Egyptologist, I wrote to Prof. Allen at the end of 2006 asking for comments on the lecture that I was preparing for delivery in Jerusalem. Prof. Allen generously commented on two preliminary English drafts, and he responded graciously and patiently to my requests for further clarification. Last but not least, Prof. John Baines was kind enough to read a draft of the entire monograph and send detailed comments and corrections. I am deeply indebted to these three extraordinary gentlemen scholars; without them it would not have been possible for a non-Egyptologist to bring this research to fruition. It goes without saying that they are not responsible for the errors in this work.

I would like to express my gratitude to the librarians of Yeshiva University for their unstinting support. Mary Ann Linahan cheerfully handled the scores of interlibrary loan requests with which I bombarded her. Many thanks, as well, to Vincent Brown, the creator of Pyramid Texts Online, for locating the old Bollingen Foundation negatives of Unas's pyramid at the Brooklyn Museum; to Dr. Edward Bleiberg, Curator of Egyptian, Classical and Ancient Middle Eastern Art, for allowing me to borrow seven of the negatives; and to L. Fred Husson, the photographer of the Bollingen expedition to Unas's pyramid, for confirming (from red markings added by hand sixty years ago) that the negatives supplied by Dr. Bleiberg are the original negatives from 1950. (Ironically, Mr. Husson developed them in the Chicago House photography laboratory of Charles F. Nims, the late lamented scholar with whom I first confronted the challenges of Semitic in Egyptian script, thirty years ago.) I would also like to thank Drs. Maurya P. Horgan and Paul Kobelski of the HK Scriptorium for their outstanding job of editing and typesetting and Prof. Michael Coogan, Director of Publications of the Harvard Semitic Museum, for providing additional layers of scrutiny.

Finally I would like to thank those who invested most heavily in this project. The first major investor is Yeshiva University, under the leadership of President Richard Joel and Provost Morton Lowengrub. Without the generous workload reductions that I received from them, this book might never have seen the light of day. The second major investor is my wife, Sara. She too has provided substantial workload reductions and other types of support too numerous to mention.

# **EARLY NORTHWEST SEMITIC SERPENT SPELLS IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS**



# 1. Introduction

The earliest connected Semitic texts known to modern scholars are usually thought to be East Semitic texts from Mesopotamia, written in the cuneiform script. In this monograph, I shall attempt to show that earlier Semitic texts have been preserved in Egypt in hieroglyphic script—Northwest Semitic texts that have been “hiding in plain sight” ever since the Pyramid Texts were published more than a century ago.

The Pyramid Texts constitute the oldest surviving corpus of ancient Egyptian religious writings. They appear already in the pyramid of Unas (Wenis), the last king of the Fifth Dynasty, whose reign is dated by most scholars to the twenty-fourth century B.C.E. That is commonly considered to be the first appearance of the Pyramid Texts; however, according to J. Baines, “it is more accurate to say that the earliest attestation of the compositions now known as the Pyramid Texts is from the reign of Sahure, not that of Wenis.”<sup>1</sup> The reign of Sahure, the second king of the Fifth Dynasty, is dated by most scholars to the twenty-fifth century B.C.E.

There is general agreement that the Pyramid Texts are older than the pyramids (of Unas and his successors) into whose walls they are carved, but how much older? The answers to that question vary, but most scholars speak in terms of centuries. N. C. Strudwick, following earlier scholars, believes that “it is plausible that they existed much earlier in oral forms.”<sup>2</sup> B. Mathieu cites evidence that “la rédaction de la plupart des formules inscrites dans cette pyramide précède de plusieurs siècles sans doute le règne d’Ounas,”<sup>3</sup> and that part of the corpus existed

<sup>1</sup> J. Baines, “Modelling Sources, Processes, and Locations of Early Mortuary Texts,” in *D’un monde à l’autre: Textes des Pyramides & Textes des Sarcophages. Actes de la table ronde internationale, “Textes des Pyramides versus Textes des Sarcophages,” Ifao, 24–26 septembre 2001* (ed. S. Bickel and B. Mathieu; Bibliothèque d’étude 139; Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2004) 22. Cf. p. 21: “fragments of offering lists from the mortuary temples of Sahure and his successors contain some of the same phraseology as the offering spells of the Pyramid Texts.”

<sup>2</sup> N. C. Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* (Writings from the Ancient World 16; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 1.

<sup>3</sup> B. Mathieu, “Modifications de texte dans la pyramide d’Ounas,” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* 96 (1996) 289.

already before the Old Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> J. P. Allen believes that “the composition of most Pyramid Texts can be dated no later than the mid-fifth dynasty” and “no earlier than Menkaure’s reign” (Fourth Dynasty).<sup>5</sup> According to Baines,

. . . material in all Pyramid Text collections bears signs of depth of written transmission, in the form of errors of transmission and redaction. . . . These features could imply centuries of development or rather less; the point of reference back should be the early 5th dynasty, with the attestation in the pyramid temple of Sahure. . . . If a long estimate is plausible, the written composition of Pyramid Texts-like materials could go back to the date from which speeches of gods are first attested, that is, the late 2nd or early 3rd Dynasty.<sup>6</sup>

H. Altenmüller gives a terminus post quem in the Fifth Dynasty, but this late date is for the entire collection: “Als geeigneter ‘terminus post quem’ ergibt sich die Zeit des Sahure, so dass bei vorsichtiger Schätzung anzunehmen ist, dass die Pyramidentexte der Fassung W[enis] . . . auf eine Textfassung der Zeit des Sahure zurückgehen, jedoch gelegentlich vielleicht älteres Textgut verwerten, das bis in die erste Dynastie zurückreichen kann.”<sup>7</sup> In a later publication, Altenmüller provides dates for the various types of spells that make up Unas’s edition: *Verklärungen* are from the Fifth Dynasty and later, *Hymnen mit der Namensformel* and *Litaneien* date to the Fourth Dynasty, and *Dramatische Texte* go back to the Second and Third Dynasties.<sup>8</sup> For Altenmüller, the oldest genre in the Pyramid Texts is the one that concerns us here, the *Zaubersprüche* (magical spells): “Nur die Zaubersprüche, die eine lange mündliche Tradition hinter sich haben und die auch eine sehr altertümliche Sprache aufweisen, sind vereinzelt einer etwas früheren Zeit, jedoch wohl auch erst der Zeit nach der Schaffung des memphitischen Einheitsstaates zuzuordnen.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Mathieu finds it plausible that

<sup>4</sup> B. Mathieu, “La distinction entre Textes des Pyramides et Textes des Sarcophages est-elle légitime?” in Bickel and Mathieu, *D’un monde à l’autre*, 253.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. Allen, “Pyramid Texts,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (ed. D. B. Redford; 3 vols.; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 3:97.

<sup>6</sup> Baines, “Modelling,” 28; cf. also pp. 17–18.

<sup>7</sup> H. Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual in den Pyramiden des Alten Reiches* (Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 24; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972) 279.

<sup>8</sup> H. Altenmüller, “Pyramidentexte,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (ed. W. Helck and E. Otto; 7 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–92) 5:20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. This statement would seem to imply that the magical spells are not earlier than the thirtieth century and not later than the twenty-seventh century B.C.E. For linguistic archaisms in the magical spells, see S. Schott, *Mythe und Mythenbildung im alten Ägypten* (Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens 15; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1945) 84.

“les formules d’offrandes ou les formules magiques de protection sont plus anciennes que les autres.”<sup>10</sup>

The texts that are of interest to Semitists are embedded in two series of defensive spells or “utterances.” The first series, numbered PT 226–43 in the standard edition of K. Sethe, is carved into the west gable of Unas’s burial chamber.<sup>11</sup> The second series, numbered PT 276–99, is located almost entirely on the east wall of the antechamber.<sup>12</sup> The two series face each other, guarding the mummy on either side. Translations of these texts and/or commentaries have been provided by Sethe, L. Speleers, S. A. B. Mercer, A. Piankoff, R. O. Faulkner, Altenmüller, C. Leitz, R. Bertrand, and Allen.<sup>13</sup>

For the most part, the spells in the two series are different, but there is some material that is repeated with small differences (cf. PT 228 §228a-b with PT 290 §431a; PT 238 §242c with PT 282 §423b-c; and PT 240 §244a with PT 299 §444a). The differences suggest that the two series were transmitted independently. Other hints that the two series were originally independent will be discussed below.<sup>14</sup> They may well come from two separate source manuscripts written in hieratic

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<sup>10</sup> Mathieu, “La distinction,” 253.

<sup>11</sup> See pp. 106–8 below and (for a hand copy) K. Sethe, *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908–22) 1:129–36 (available on the website of the University of Chicago Library: [www.lib.uchicago.edu/eos/html/](http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/eos/html/)). The images in the present volume are printed from high resolution scans of negatives used for the edited (and, hence, sometimes different) images in A. Piankoff, *The Pyramid of Unas* (Bollingen Series 40, Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations 5; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968). They are reprinted here, together with revised captions from that book, courtesy of Princeton University Press and the Brooklyn Museum. They can be viewed at high magnification online at [www.eisenbrauns.com/item/stearlyn](http://www.eisenbrauns.com/item/stearlyn) and [www.pyramidtextsonline.com/photographs.html](http://www.pyramidtextsonline.com/photographs.html).

<sup>12</sup> See pp. 109–10 above and Sethe, *Pyramidentexte*, 1:217–31. The image on p. 109 shows a larger number of spells than does the edited image in Piankoff’s fig. 31; the numerical labels provided by Piankoff above the image have been adjusted accordingly.

<sup>13</sup> K. Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (6 vols.; Hamburg: J. J. Augustin, 1935–62); L. Speleers, *Les Textes des Pyramides égyptiennes* (Brussels, 1923–24); S. A. B. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts, in Translation and Commentary* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1952); Piankoff, *Pyramid*; R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Altenmüller, *Begräbnisritual*; C. Leitz, “Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidentexten,” *Orientalia N.S.* 65 (1996) 381–427; R. Bertrand, *Les Textes de la Pyramide d’Unas* (Beuvrages: ANOUP, 2004); J. P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Writings from the Ancient World 23; Leiden: Brill, 2005). I am indebted to R. K. Ritner for the reference to Leitz’s article.

<sup>14</sup> See at chapter 3 n. 45 and at chapter 4, n. 17 below.

or cursive hieroglyphs.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the serpent spells exhibit the “signs of depth of written transmission, in the form of errors of transmission and redaction” that, according to Baines, “could imply centuries of development.”<sup>16</sup> It goes without saying that the separate origin of the two series is merely a diachronic matter; it has little bearing on the synchronic literary and ritual relationship between the two series in the final redaction of the Pyramid Texts.

Both series of defensive spells were designed to protect Unas’s mummy against snakes. Ophidiophobia, the fear of snakes, was pervasive in Egypt and the neighboring countries. In the words of Leitz:

Von all den gefährlichen Tieren, mit denen die Menschen im alten Ägypten konfrontiert wurden, haben keine sie mehr geängstigt und gleichzeitig fasziniert als die Schlangen. . . . Aus dem Mittleren und weit mehr noch aus dem Neuen Reich sind zahlreiche Papyri mit Sprüchen überliefert, die den von einer Schlange Gebissenen helfen sollten. . . .<sup>17</sup>

The snake spells of the Pyramid Texts are by no means the only early manifestation of this fear. Sumerian serpent spells are found already in the pre-Sargonic period,<sup>18</sup> and Egyptian snake charming is depicted on a prehistoric

<sup>15</sup> Baines, “Modelling,” 28–29.

<sup>16</sup> See at n. 6 above.

<sup>17</sup> Leitz, “Schlangensprüche,” 381. Cf. G. Meurer, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 189; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 271; H.-G. Buchholz, “Furcht vor Schlangen und Umgang mit Schlangen in Altsyrien, Altkypros und dem Umfeld,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 32 (2000) 37–168.

<sup>18</sup> M. Krebernik, *Die Beschwörungen aus Fara und Ebla: Untersuchungen zur ältesten keilschriftlichen Beschwörungsliteratur* (Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 2; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984) nos. 1, 3, 30, 35, 36. Cf. M. C. Astour, “Two Ugaritic Serpent Charms,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27 (1968) 17: “The practice of snake charming is very ancient; muš.lah<sub>4</sub> (the ‘snake walker’ or ‘snake handler’) appears in lists of professions as early as the Fara period.” For these and other serpent spells through the Old Babylonian period, see J. van Dijk, A. Goetze, and M. I. Hussey, *Early Mesopotamian Incantations and Rituals* (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts 11; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) nos. 30–34; G. Cunningham, “Deliver Me from Evil”: *Mesopotamian Incantations 2500–1500 BC* (Studia Pohl, Series Maior 17; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1997) 34–35, 46–47, 78–79, 87–88, 90–91, 105; I. L. Finkel, “On Some Dog, Snake and Scorpion Incantations,” in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999) 223–34. I am indebted to L. Kogan for the next-to-last reference.

rock drawing from the vicinity of Aswan.<sup>19</sup> In a later Akkadian prayer against snakebite, the fear is expressed explicitly: “I, so-and-so, son of [so-and-so], your servant, am afraid, frightened, and terrified, on account of the evil of a snake.”<sup>20</sup>

In Mesopotamia, snake charming seems to have been associated with the temple, for “Akkadian texts mention the *mušlaḥhu* (and the female *mušlaḥhātu*) in enumerations of temple personnel.”<sup>21</sup> There is some evidence for this at Ugarit as well. Of the three texts dealing with venomous snakes from Ugarit (including one incantation),<sup>22</sup> two were discovered in the private library of a priest, suggesting that “serpent charming . . . was occasionally practised by some or other members of the priestly guild.”<sup>23</sup> I shall argue below that some of the serpent spells in the Pyramid Texts were supplied by priests living only around two hundred kilometers from Ugarit.

The Bible (Ps 58:5–6; Jer 8:17) speaks of snakes that do not listen to “whisperers” (i.e., snake charmers) and snakes against which there is no “whisper” (i.e., incantation). This whispering seems to have originated in an attempt to imitate the hissing of snakes.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, one passage appears to suggest that these whisperers had mastered the language of snakes: “If the snake bites in the absence of whispering (*laḥaš*, LXX *psithurismon*), one who knows the language (*baṭal*

<sup>19</sup> O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. T. J. Hallett; New York: Seabury Press, 1978) 312 fig. 417.

<sup>20</sup> B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1996) 2:553.

<sup>21</sup> Astour, “Serpent Charms,” 17.

<sup>22</sup> D. Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961)* (Ras Shamra-Ugarit 4; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988) 193–226; idem, *Les textes rituels* (2 vols.; Ras Shamra-Ugarit 12; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 2000) 2:829–34; idem, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Writings from the Ancient World 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002) 158–59; idem, “Ugaritic Liturgy against Venomous Reptiles” and “A Ugaritic Incantation against Serpents and Sorcerers,” in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 295–98, 327–28; Y. Avishur, על הפעול גהה רשות מקרא לאור טקסט אוגריהי חדש 57–71. I am indebted to J. Huehnergard for reminding me of the first three references.

<sup>23</sup> Astour, “Serpent Charms,” 36.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 8; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 71: “His [the snake charmer’s] power over snakes comes from the similarity in sound between his whispering and the hissing of serpents”; and ibid., 74: “the snake charmer imitating the snake over which he wanted to have control.” Eventually the connection between whispering and hissing (which never existed in Mesopotamia) was severed. In rabbinic literature, magical whispering is not addressed solely to snakes.

*hallāšōn*) has no advantage” (Eccl 10:11). C. L. Seow aptly compares Hebrew *ba’al hallāšōn* with Akkadian *bēl lišāni*.<sup>25</sup> According to *CAD*, the latter expression means “one who knows a (foreign) language”; it refers to someone who knows the language of a specific foreigner, for example, *bēl lišāni šū* “he knows the language (of the emissary).”<sup>26</sup> We may also compare Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (< Akkadian) *bēl lišāne*<sup>27</sup> and Hebrew *ba’alē l’sōnōt*, both used in rabbinic literature (*b.Menahot* 65a and *y.Baba Batra* VII.xvi.3, respectively) of people who have mastered many foreign languages. The point of the verse in Ecclesiastes appears to be that, once the snake has bitten its victim, whispering to the snake does not help, and one who has mastered the language of snakes<sup>28</sup> has no advantage over anyone else. I shall attempt to show below that some of the serpent spells in the Pyramid Texts are of the same type: blandishments and threats whispered to poisonous snakes in their own language.

In addressing a snake, the snake charmer will sometimes pretend to be speaking in the name of a god, especially a god feared by the snake. In a Sumerian snake spell extant in several versions, the charmer claims to be an emissary of Ninazu, the king of snakes: “Snake, your king has sent me to you; your king Ninazu has sent me to you.”<sup>29</sup> A similar technique seems to be exhibited by the serpent spells in the Pyramid Texts, where the person addressing the hostile snake claims to embody the mother of snakes.

Both series of serpent spells in the Pyramid Texts contain passages that make little sense to the Egyptologist. For example, most students of the Pyramid Texts have found the opening portions of PT 235 and PT 236 and the concluding portion of PT 235 so difficult to translate that they have not even bothered to try. Of these opening portions, Sethe writes: “stösst auf Schwierigkeiten” (PT 235) and “zunächst unverständliche Zauberworte, die in ihrem *hj.tj bj.tj* schon äußerlich an unser Hokus-pokus erinnern” (PT 236).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, E. Edel discusses the writing

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<sup>25</sup> C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 18C; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 318, 327.

<sup>26</sup> A. L. Oppenheim et al., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956–) (hereafter *CAD*) 9 (L), 215.

<sup>27</sup> M. Fox, “בָּנְשָׁן־לִי,” *Lešonenu* 41 (1976–77) 75.

<sup>28</sup> This is not exactly the same as Seow’s definitions of *ba’al hallāšōn*: “one who is conversant with snake incantations” (*Ecclesiastes*, 319) and “an expert in the language of magic and incantation” (*ibid.*, 327).

<sup>29</sup> J. van Dijk, “Vert comme Tišpak,” *Orientalia N.S.* 38 (1969) 545; Cunningham, “Deliver Me from Evil,” 78–79, 87–88.

<sup>30</sup> Sethe, *Übersetzung*, 1:212, 215.

of “unverständlicher Zauberwörter” at the beginning of PT 236.<sup>31</sup> Faulkner considers PT 235 to be “untranslatable at both beginning and end”; Altenmüller too labels it “unübersetzbare.”<sup>32</sup> Leitz follows Faulkner in putting ellipsis points in his translation at the beginning and end of PT 235 and at the beginning of PT 236.<sup>33</sup> Others substitute transliteration for translation at the beginning of PT 235 (*kou aaa imehou imehou; Kwtiw, 'Imhw, 'Imhw*)<sup>34</sup> and the beginning of PT 236 (*kebeb hititibili; Kbbhititibili; Kebehititi-biti; Kébébéhititibili*).<sup>35</sup> Allen has broken with this tradition, offering translations for all of the passages previously considered “untranslatable.”<sup>36</sup>

According to R. K. Ritner, the untranslatable spells in the two series are orthographically distinct from the other spells; they are distinguished by “exceptional phonetic spelling, lacking expected determinatives.”<sup>37</sup> Some of them also contain a sequence of three *alephs* (333), which Ritner characterizes as “VERY

<sup>31</sup> E. Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik* (Analecta orientalia 34/39; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1955/1964) 19 §42.

<sup>32</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56; Altenmüller, *Begräbnisritual*, 258.

<sup>33</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56; Leitz, “Schlangensprüche,” 407.

<sup>34</sup> Bertrand, *Textes*, 78; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 72.

<sup>35</sup> Bertrand, *Textes*, 78; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 72; Piankoff, *Pyramid*, 98; B. Mathieu, “Les formules conjuratoires dans les pyramides à textes: quelques réflexions,” in *La magie en Égypte: à la recherche d'une définition* (Paris: La documentation Française, 2002) 191. (I am indebted to Ritner for the last reference.) Mathieu (*ibid.*, 191 and 203) wonders whether we are dealing with what he calls a “palindrome.” According to Ritner (e-mail communication, June 7, 2010), “Mathieu’s suggestion for reading PT 236 §240 does not entail a true ‘palindrome’ (a text that can be read in either direction: e. g., Ablanathanalba in the Greek and Demotic papyri with a single theta for th). Rather, he suggests reading just this portion of the vertical PT spell in INVERSE order (bottom to top), changing the unintelligible *k-b-b-h-i-ti-i-ti-b-i-ti-i-ś-s* to produce a still-defective *s-ś + ti + b-i-ti + i-ti-i + h-i-b + b-k*: ‘scribe, T(hoth), Lower Egyptian king, sovereign, ibis, falcon.’ The enemy snake is thus said to be the inverse of Thoth. While rather ingenious, this interpretation requires 1) an abbreviation of the name Thoth (rarely attested), 2) an odd use of Lower Egyptian ruler (*bity*) rather than the more common *nsw.t* for generic ‘king,’ and 3) the only reading direction (bottom to top) not typically allowed in hieroglyphic texts. Mathieu argues that this is a special ‘magical case’ of inversion otherwise found only for very short names (his note 20). If this were the guiding principle in PT 236, why is it not used in the remainder of the same spell (‘son of Hefgat is your name’ where Tagfeh for Hefgat is meaningless), and, more importantly, why is it not used in any of the other ‘problematic’ passages in PT 235, 281, or 286? The better explanation is that all these phonetic passages follow the same pattern and use exotic, non-Egyptian speech. The theory that explains most explains best.”

<sup>36</sup> See n. 40 below.

<sup>37</sup> E-mail communication, May 9, 2007.

non-Egyptian.”<sup>38</sup> The evidence suggests that these spells were incomprehensible to most Egyptians already in the Old Kingdom:

The triple *aleph* combination, which . . . recalls later “group writing,” appears elsewhere in the Pyramid Texts in often garbled form, miscarved from *ȝȝȝ* to *tyw*. This clearly indicates that the Egyptian scribes had difficulty understanding what was intended, and that the text is hardly in transparent Egyptian.<sup>39</sup> Most passages in the Pyramid Texts are quite comprehensible, if mythologically complex. A subset of the snake spells are distinctive by their phonetic spellings that have led most Egyptologists to label them as incomprehensible. These are not just standard exemplars of Pyramid Text spells. They are a case apart, as has long been recognized.<sup>40</sup>

All of this led Ritner to suggest in 1995 that one of the spells (PT 281) was in a language other than Egyptian:

Given the syncretistic nature of magic in Egypt, as elsewhere, there is nothing unusual in the occurrence of either foreign elements or whole texts. A Cretan spell is included in an Egyptian medical manual from the Eighteenth Dynasty, and Semitic spells and gods are found throughout New Kingdom compilations. The preference for exotic languages may also have motivated the use of abracadabra “Zauberwörter” throughout the Demotic and Greek papyri, though many cases are merely phonetic renderings of spoken Egyptian. In any case, the technique is quite ancient in Egypt, appearing already in the Pyramid Texts (ca. 2400 B.C.).<sup>41</sup>

The Egyptian medical manual mentioned here, the London Medical Papyrus, contains six Semitic spells in hieratic script: one bears an Egyptian heading identifying it as being in a foreign language; another invokes the Phoenician god of

<sup>38</sup> E-mail communication, May 7, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> For a fuller discussion, see appendix below.

<sup>40</sup> E-mail communication, May 8, 2007. In two other e-mails (May 7 and May 9), Ritner discusses Allen’s translation of *ȝȝȝ*: “Allen, p. 18, no. 10, translated the three alephs as ‘long one’ to match his desired interpretation of *im* as ‘flank/rib,’ but that requires a devious interpretation of *ȝw* > *ȝw* in an unetymological spelling of *ȝw* ‘long’ (Wörterbuch I, pp. 3-4), never so spelled in Old Egyptian or the PT.” “Egyptian *ȝw* ‘long’ . . . always is written in the PT with the inclusion of the ideogram F 40 (see PT 285 end for the double use of that sign). . . . [Thus,] the writing is not proper for an Egyptian word, and one must explain why in this context the writing would have been consciously deformed. IF it’s group writing, then no problem.”

<sup>41</sup> R. K. Ritner, “Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 3351–52. In the last sentence, Ritner has PT 281 in mind, as he makes clear in his n. 85.

healing, Eshmun; and a third is against the *fnt* worm.<sup>42</sup> Also relevant here is the Aramaic incantation against scorpions in Demotic script from Wadi Hammamat.<sup>43</sup>

The use of foreign languages in magical texts is well attested in Mesopotamia as well. Of the ninety-five early incantations and rituals in the Yale Babylonian Collection, fourteen are written wholly or partly in Subarian-Hurrian, Elamite, or unidentified languages.<sup>44</sup> For example, part of text 4 is an Elamite(?) incantation described in Akkadian as an “incantation against the worm.”<sup>45</sup> It is reminiscent of the Semitic spell in the London Medical Papyrus described in Egyptian as “another incantation against the *fnt* worm.”

On August 7, 2002, Ritner sent me an e-mail message calling my attention to the spells in question and asking, “Can any of this be Semitic?” He and I had previously studied a number of Semitic texts written in Egyptian script, magical and nonmagical, but they were from much later periods.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the suggestion that there might be Semitic passages already in the Pyramid Texts is not as audacious as it might appear at first glance. Indeed, some scholars believe that there may have been foreign influence on Egyptian magic at an even earlier stage:

The culture of ancient Egypt was generally resistant to foreign influence, but magic formed an exception to this rule. The rare, the exotic, and even the primitive, are prized in magic as their very foreignness gives them power. During the late fourth/early third millennia, certain aspects of Mesopotamian culture seem to have been imported into Egypt.<sup>47</sup> The motif of the god overcoming

<sup>42</sup> R. C. Steiner, “Northwest Semitic Incantations in an Egyptian Medical Papyrus of the Fourteenth Century B.C.E.,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (1992) 191–200; idem, “The London Medical Papyrus,” in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 328–29.

<sup>43</sup> R. C. Steiner, “The Scorpion Spell from Wadi Hammamat: Another Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 60 (2001) 259–68.

<sup>44</sup> Dijk, Goetze, and Hussey, *Incantations and Rituals*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>46</sup> For translations and previous literature on the nonmagical texts, see R. C. Steiner “The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Context of Scripture*, 1.309–327; idem and A. Mosak Moshavi, “A Selective Glossary of Northwest Semitic Texts in Egyptian Script,” in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 21; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 1249–66.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. P. R. S. Moorey, “From Gulf to Delta in the Fourth Millennium BCE: The Syrian Connection,” *Eretz-Israel* 21 (1990) 62\*–69\*; H. Pittman, “Constructing Context: The Gebel el-Arak Knife—Greater Mesopotamian and Egyptian Interaction in the Late Fourth Millennium B.C.E.,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First*

dangerous animals, so common on magical stelae and objects . . . , may derive from Mesopotamian art.<sup>48</sup>

Contact between Egyptians and Semites goes back to prehistoric times. Trade between Egypt and the Levant is attested not only in the Old Kingdom but also in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods.<sup>49</sup> Vases inscribed with the names of King Khafre/Chephren (Fourth Dynasty) and King Pepy I (Sixth Dynasty) have been found at Ebla.<sup>50</sup> Already in the first half of the third millennium B.C.E., there was a booming maritime trade between Egypt and the city-states of Syria, carried on through the port of Byblos on the Lebanese coast.<sup>51</sup> Carbonized remains of coniferous resins from the thirtieth century B.C.E. have been found in Levantine jars from the tomb of King Djer (First Dynasty).<sup>52</sup> Artifacts from Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt found in Israel (including potsherds with the name of King Narmer) and vice versa attest to trade relationships stretching back to the fourth millennium B.C.E.<sup>53</sup> It has even been suggested that merchants from the southern

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*Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (ed. J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 9–32; and A. H. Joffe, “Egypt and Syro-Mesopotamia in the 4th Millennium: Implications of the New Chronology,” *Current Anthropology* 41 (2000) 113–23.

<sup>48</sup> G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) 161.

<sup>49</sup> For recent surveys, see *Egypt and the Levant: Interrelations from the 4th through the Early 3rd Millennium B.C.E.* (ed. E. C. M. van den Brink and T. E. Levy; New Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology; London: Leicester University Press, 2002); J. Weinstein, “Egypt and Canaan in the Bronze Age—A Century of Research,” in *One Hundred Years of American Archaeology in the Middle East: Proceedings of the American Schools of Oriental Research Centennial Celebration, Washington, DC, April 2000* (ed. D. R. Clark and V. H. Matthews; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2003) 145–56. I am indebted to A. Koller for these references.

<sup>50</sup> G. Scandone Matthiae, “Vasi iscritti di Chefren e Pepi I nel Palazzo Reale G di Ebla,” *Studi Eblaiti* 1 (1979) 33–43; M. Wright, “Literary Sources for the History of Palestine and Syria: Contacts between Egypt and Syro-Palestine during the Old Kingdom,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988) 152; D. Wengrow, *The Archaeology of Early Egypt: Social Transformations in North-east Africa, 10,000 to 2650 BC* (Cambridge World Archaeology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 150, and the literature cited there. See further at chapter 5 nn. 29–31 below.

<sup>51</sup> Wengrow, *Archaeology*, 148–50; J. M. Weinstein, “Byblos,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (ed. D. B. Redford; 3 vols.; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 1:219.

<sup>52</sup> Wengrow, *Archaeology*, 148 n. 17; A. J. Spencer, *Early Egypt: The Rise of Civilisation in the Nile Valley* (London: British Museum Press, 1993) 85.

<sup>53</sup> A. Ben-Tor, “The Relations between Egypt and the Land of Canaan during the Third Millennium B.C.,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982) 3–18; M. Wright, “Literary Sources

Levant resided at Maadi (twelve kilometers south of Cairo) and Dep (in the far northwest of the Delta) in the early fourth millennium B.C.E.<sup>54</sup>

From the time of Unas himself, we have a good deal of evidence—much of it from his Pyramid Texts—pointing to Egyptian contact with Byblos and the Lebanon region:

1. On the causeway leading to Unas's pyramid, a scene (actual or conventional) of seagoing ships carrying Asiatics to Egypt has been preserved.<sup>55</sup> It is usually assumed that the ships are returning from a trading expedition to Byblos.<sup>56</sup>
2. According to PT 77, Unas's brow was anointed with the finest oil of the š,<sup>57</sup> a coniferous tree (fir, pine, and/or cedar) whose products were transported to Egypt by ship from the port of Byblos.<sup>58</sup> In later Egyptian texts, š-wood

for the History of Palestine and Syria: Contacts between Egypt and Syro-Palestine during the Protodynastic Period,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 48 (1985) 245; E. Hornung, *History of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999) 6, 158; Wengrow, *Archaeology*, 137–40; E. Braun et al., “New Evidence for Egyptian Connections during a Late Phase of Early Bronze I from the Soreq Basin in South-Central Israel,” in *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and Neighboring Lands in Memory of Douglas L. Esse* (ed. S. R. Wolff, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 59; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2001) 59–92.

<sup>54</sup> T. A. H. Wilkinson, *Genesis of the Pharaohs: Dramatic New Discoveries That Rewrite the Origins of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003) 126–27. Wilkinson adds that “Lower Egypt in the Predynastic period was a remarkably cosmopolitan place, in which Egyptians and Palestinians regularly rubbed shoulders” (p. 127). For a dissenting view, see Wengrow, *Archaeology*, 86–87.

<sup>55</sup> S. Hassan, “The Causeway of *Wnis* at Sakkara,” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 80 (1955) 138–39. Hassan notes that a similar scene is preserved in the Temple of Sahure (Fifth Dynasty) at Abusir.

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., J. Málek, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids: Egypt during the Old Kingdom* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986) 84.

<sup>57</sup> Sethe, *Pyramidentexte*, 1:30; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 18; Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 22 no. 51.

<sup>58</sup> J. A. Wilson, “Egyptian Historical Texts,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament [ANET]* (ed. J. B. Pritchard; 3rd ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969) 227 (forty ships filled with š logs brought by Snefru in the twenty-sixth/twenty-seventh century B.C.E.); Wright, “Old Kingdom,” 146, 158 nn. 3–4; W. Helck, “Byblos,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (ed. W. Helck et al.; 7 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–92) 1:889; R. Giveon, “Libanon,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 3:1013; R. Germer, “Tanne,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 6:210; idem, “Flora,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 1:540–41; P. I. Kuniholm, “Wood,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (ed. E. M. Meyers; 5 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 5:348: “One

is said to come from *Kbn* “Byblos,” *Rmn* “Lebanon,” and so on.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the term ‘š has a plausible Semitic etymology that has not previously been noted. Northwest Semitic \*‘iš “tree, wood,” pronounced [ʃiʔ?] with a glottalic (ejective) lateral fricative,<sup>60</sup> appears to be a good phonetic fit.<sup>61</sup> Thus, it seems likely that the term ‘š was imported from Byblos together with the coniferous resins and oils used in the mummification process.<sup>62</sup>

3. PT 322 mentions a place named *Ngʒ(w)*, written with the foreign-land determinative.<sup>63</sup> This toponym is generally believed to be a name for Lebanon or part of it.<sup>64</sup> It too is associated with ‘š-wood.

school of thought proposes that the Egyptians did not make a distinction between cedar and juniper, and that *ash* refers to better-quality conifers and *meru* refers to some kind of second-quality timber.” (I am indebted to A. Koller for reminding me of the last reference.) According to Baines (e-mail communication, February 12, 2009), “‘š is probably generic, rather than referring to only one species.”

<sup>59</sup> P. Montet, “Le pays de Negaou, près de Byblos, et son dieu,” *Syria* 4 (1923) 182–83, 184–85; M. Weippert, “Libanon,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928–83) 6:643–44; Giveon, “Libanon,” 1013.

<sup>60</sup> See R. C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (American Oriental Series 59; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1977) 156. PS \*š is the ancestor of Arabic *d* and is itself transliterated *d* in many older works.

<sup>61</sup> In the New Kingdom, \*š was rendered with Egyptian *d*, but by then Canaanite \*š may have merged with *s*, and Egyptian *d* had become an affricate; see J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 405–6; and R. C. Steiner, *Affricated Sade in the Semitic Languages* (American Academy for Jewish Research Monograph Series 3; New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1982) 68–69. See also the discussion of ‘-b-š-w = ‘ubšū “hurry” below.

<sup>62</sup> For a parallel case (the importation of *Ficus sycomorus* together with its name to Israel from Yemen), see R. C. Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa, Sycomores from Sheba: A Study of Amos’ Occupations* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 36; Washington D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2003) 48–65.

<sup>63</sup> Sethe, *Pyramidentexte*, 1:265; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 102; Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 67 no.7.

<sup>64</sup> Montet, “Pays de Negaou,” 181–92; W. F. Albright, “The Eighteenth-Century Princes of Byblos and the Chronology of Middle Bronze,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 176 (1964) 44–45 n. 25; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 102; W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (2nd ed.; Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971) 22; R. Stadelmann, “Chaitau,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 1:902; Giveon, “Libanon,” 1013–14; Weippert, “Libanon,” 643–44; Wright, “Old Kingdom,” 151; Leitz, “Schlangensprüche,” 408, and the literature cited there. Allen (*Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 437, s.v. *Negau*), on the other hand, takes *Ngʒ(w)* to be a “town on the site of the northern part of modern

4. According to PT 322, *Ng3(w)* is the dwelling place of *H̄y-t3w* “The One that Appears in Flame.”<sup>65</sup> This obscure deity appears also in a Fifth Dynasty inscription carved into a stone cylinder seal found at Byblos.<sup>66</sup> Two other attestations of the name *H̄y-t3w* are found in PT 238 and 282, right after serpent spells that will be shown to contain Semitic phrases.<sup>67</sup> PT 238 §242c and 282 §423b-c are so similar to each other that they must have a common ancestor. The fact that this is one of the few passages common to both series of serpent spells hints at its importance.

Cairo near the river.” Ritner (e-mail communication, October 27, 2008) notes: “There are two very distinct locations with this name, one the Negau-bull town, with a bull and city determinative, that is located along the Nile. . . . The other is distinguished as a foreign region linked to lumber with the knife, so-called ‘pustule’ (used for ‘cedar,’ ‘pine,’ etc.) and foreign land determinatives. . . . The examples in PT 322 §518d can only be the foreign land linked to Byblos as the writings have the knife and foreign-land determinatives.”

<sup>65</sup> As demonstrated by Allen, this is an epithet of the sun; see chapter 3, n. 71 below. Others believe that *H̄y-t3w* is a translation or transcription of a Semitic divine name (Rašap, Haddu, Āṭtaru, etc.). See G. Scandone Matthiae and P. Xella, *H̄y-t3w di Biblo = Rašap?*” *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 9 (1981) 147–52; Stadelmann, “Chaitau,” 902; E. Lipiński, *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 64; Studia Phoenicia 14; Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 319–20; T. Schneider, “Wer war der Gott ‘Chajtau,’” in *Les Civilisations du bassin méditerranéen: Hommages à Joachim Śliwa* (ed. K. M. Ciałowicz and J. A. Ostrowski; Cracow: Université Jagellonne, 2000) 215–20; and the literature cited in the next footnote.

<sup>66</sup> P. Montet, *Byblos et L'Égypte: Quatre campagnes de fouilles à Gebeil* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 11; Paris: P. Geuthner, 1928–29) 62–68; H. Goedicke, “A Cylinder Seal of a Ruler of Byblos of the Third Millennium,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 19 (1963) 1–6; idem, “The Cylinder Seal of a Ruler of Byblos Reconsidered,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 5 (1966) 19–21; R. Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Études sur les dieux phéniciens hérités par l'empire romain* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain 14; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 76–88; Helck, *Beziehungen*, 22; idem, “Byblos,” 889; Wright, “Old Kingdom,” 151; Weippert, “Libanon,” 649; G. T. Martin, “A Much-Published Byblite Cylinder Seal,” in *Ancient Egyptian and Mediterranean Studies in Memory of William A. Ward* (ed. L. H. Lesko; Providence, R.I.: Brown University, 1998) 173–82. See also at chapter 5, n. 14 below.

<sup>67</sup> For attempts to explain why an Asiatic deity should be mentioned in Egyptian religious texts, see Stadelmann, “Chaitau,” 902; Wright, “Old Kingdom,” 151–52. The use of an Egyptian name for an Asiatic deity is not unusual. Ritner (e-mail communication, February 7, 2009) writes: “The classic case is Hyksos Baal, whom the Egyptians of a later period describe as a form of the native Seth. The local, home god of Ramses II was a Semitic Baal, (marginally) Egyptianized. Egyptians can use the foreign name (Baal, Astarte, Anat, Reshep, etc.), but they do use a specifically Egyptian name ‘Hathor’ for the Baalat of Byblos. In Egyptian terms, this goddess is Hathor.”

5. In PT 286, the term *kbnw* “Byblites” is used to refer to snakes that slither away upon hearing one of the immediately preceding Semitic spells. That snakes from the Levant were found in ancient Egypt is known from an Egyptian treatise on snakes, which mentions the Palestinian viper (found today in Lebanon as well as Israel) as well as a snake with a name believed to be Semitic (*grš*).<sup>68</sup> Snakes from Byblos could have come to Egypt as stowaways on ships arriving from Byblos, hidden in piles of *š*-logs.<sup>69</sup>
6. Fragments of five stone vessels found at Byblos bear Unas’s name.<sup>70</sup> Like the many other royal objects excavated there, they are “probably . . . bequests to the local cults of Ba‘alat and *H̄-tȝwy*.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> S. Sauneron, *Un Traité égyptien d’ophiologie* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1989) 16–17, 75, 162; C. Leitz, *Die Schlangennamen in den ägyptischen und griechischen Giftbüchern* (Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse 6; Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997) 126–27, 149; Meurer, *Feinde*, 273. If the name is derived from the Northwest Semitic root *g-r-š* “drive out/away,” it is probably a passive participle; cf. chapter 3, n. 154 below. Ritner (e-mail communication, November 5, 2008) points out that there is a cross-cultural tendency to give snakes apotropaic names.

<sup>69</sup> The best-known example of bioinvasion by boat is the introduction of the brown tree snake to Guam. For poisonous snakes lurking in and among logs, see the Akkadian spell translated by Foster (*Before the Muses*, 1:128): “It secreted itself(?) in a withered oak. The snake lurks in a beam.”

<sup>70</sup> Wright, “Old Kingdom,” 148–49.

<sup>71</sup> D. B. Redford, “Egypt and Western Asia in the Old Kingdom,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986) 141.

## 2. *Rīr-Rīr*, the Two-headed Mother Snake

One of the texts that Ritner inquired about in his e-mail of August 7, 2002 particularly caught my eye: *kw 333 imhw imhw* (PT 235 §239a). That night, I wrote back suggesting that “the phrase *imhw* may be *?m hw* ‘mother of snake.’” Recalling that Egyptian *ȝ* was originally used to render Semitic *r*,<sup>1</sup> I suggested further that *333* was the name *Rīr-Rīr*, a reduplicated form of Hebrew-Aramaic *rīr*. The noun *rīr* refers to spittle (more precisely: slaver, drool) and other liquid secretions and is no doubt used here of snake venom.<sup>2</sup> Although the name *Rīr-Rīr* (= “Spittle-Spittle”) has four *r*’s, it is written as though it had only three. That would seem to indicate that it was pronounced not [ri:r ri:r] but [ri:r:i:r], with the two adjacent *r*’s in the middle coalescing into a single long [r:].<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See C. Peust, *Egyptian Phonology: An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language* (Monographien zur ägyptischen Sprache 2; Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt, 1999) 127–28, and the literature cited there; and add now R. El-Sayed, “Afrikanisches Lehngut in ägyptischen Schriftquellen des Alten Reiches bis in griechisch-römische Zeit,” in *Das Ägyptische und die Sprachen Vorderasiens, Nordafrikas und der Ägäis: Akten des Basler Kolloquiums zum ägyptisch-nichtsemitischen Sprachkontakt, Basel 9.–11. Juli 2003* (ed. T. Schneider; Alter Orient und Altes Testament 310; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004) 315.

<sup>2</sup> See at chapter 3 nn. 15–19 below. The same Semitic noun may underlie the later snake name *rr*; see G. Meurer, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 189; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 273. So too Ritner (e-mail communication, October 27, 2008) independently: “Cf. the later Egyptian serpent name *r-r(w)* in the Coffin Texts (Wb. II, p. 438/12), also discussed in Serge Sauneron, *Un Traité égyptien d’ophiologie* [Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1989], pp. 16–17 (and elsewhere, see index). The Sauneron text is particularly interesting, since it discusses at that point an ‘Asiatic snake’ whose name is lost but whose color is said to be like that of the *rr*-snake. Could this be the Hebrew-Aramaic *rīr* but now in ‘Egyptian’ without duplication?”

<sup>3</sup> See also at n. 27 below. In calling it a “single long” consonant, I am, of course, using phonetic terminology. From the phonological point of view, it is “doubled” or “geminated.” The phenomenon is common in the Aramaic text in Demotic script, e.g., *kr<sup>m</sup> mȝšeʒrzbȝnȝ* = [kol maš'al:ib:ana:] “every request of our hearts,” in C. F. Nims and R. C. Steiner, “A Paganized Version of Ps 20:2–6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of the*

In Akkadian, reduplicated names are common during the Sargonic period,<sup>4</sup> beginning a few decades after Unas's reign.<sup>5</sup> T. J. Meek writes: "As is well known, iterative names were characteristic of the Agade period, but in course of time they tended to disappear, until in the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur they were scarcely found at all in Mesopotamia."<sup>6</sup> In the Old Akkadian texts from Nuzi (Agade period), "an unusually large number of [personal names] (approximately one fifth) are characterized by the iteration or reduplication of one syllable."<sup>7</sup> Some of them are Sumerian (e.g., *Nin-nin*, *Ur-ur*, and *Šeš-šeš*), but others are Semitic (e.g., *A-ħu-ħu* < *Aħu-aħu*, *A-bu-bu* < *Abu-abu?*, *Í-lí-lí* < *Ilī-ilī?*).<sup>8</sup> Significantly, "a number of them are abbreviated names and contain the deity element only, viz., *Ba-ba*, *Bi-bi*, *Bù-bù*, *Da-da*, *Du-du*, *Ku-ku*, *Na-na*, *Tu-tu*, and *Zu-zu*."<sup>9</sup> In Mesopotamia, it seems, reduplication was particularly common in divine names in the third millennium B.C.E.<sup>10</sup>

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*American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) 263, 268 (XI/16). Even a scribe who knew that the long [r:] in the middle of the name spanned a morpheme boundary might have written it with a single *r*. For example, at Ugarit the personal name written *ia-tar-<sup>d</sup>MAŠ.MAŠ* = *ia-tar-Rašap* in syllabic script appears as *ytršp* = [yatar:ašap], with a single *r*, in alphabetic script; see G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 67; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003) 747, s.v. *ršp*, and 994, s.v. *ytršp*). For this and other examples from Ugarit and elsewhere, see W. G. E. Watson, "Shared Consonants in Northwest Semitic," *Biblica* 50 (1969) 525–33; and idem, "More on Shared Consonants," *Biblica* 52 (1971) 44–50. In Modern Hebrew, the word for "soccer" is *kaddüregel* < *kaddür* "ball" + *reğel* "foot." The Talmud (*b.Berakhot* 15b) uses the term *d<sup>b</sup>eķim* to refer to the adjacent consonants of *'al-l<sup>b</sup>babkem*, *wa<sup>a</sup>baditem-m<sup>e</sup>hērāh*, etc. and requires the reader to put a space (*rewah*) between them.

<sup>4</sup> See B. R. Foster, "Ethnicity and Onomastics in Sargonic Mesopotamia," *Orientalia N.S.* 51 (1982) 299, 302, and the literature cited there.

<sup>5</sup> See at chapter 5, nn. 31–33 below.

<sup>6</sup> T. J. Meek, "The Iterative Names in the Old Akkadian Texts from Nuzi," *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 32 (1935) 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* For the debate concerning the reading of the divine name *Ba-ba*, see G. Marchesi, "On the Divine Name <sup>d</sup>BA-Ú," *Orientalia N.S.* 71 (2002) 161–71; and G. Rubio, "Reading Sumerian Names, I: Ensuhkešdanna and Baba," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 62 (2010) 35–39. I am indebted to J. Huehnergard for these references.

<sup>10</sup> For the controversial theory that the divine name *Enlil* is derived from Semitic \**ilpil*, which became *En-lil* "Lord Wind" by folk etymology, see the literature cited by D. O. Edzard, "Enlil, Vater der Götter," in *Semitic and Assyriological Studies Presented to Pelio Fronzaroli by Pupils and Colleagues* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003) 173–84. I am

It is possible that the reduplication in these names is related to the iconic use of reduplication. Reduplication has long been recognized as a very ancient means of expressing plurality.<sup>11</sup> Such iconic reduplication is attested from the third millennium B.C.E. to the present day.<sup>12</sup> In Sumerian, “plurality may be expressed by reduplication of the nominal base: a-gàr-a-gàr ‘fields’ . . .”<sup>13</sup> Reduplication to express plurality is attested also in Eblaite, where it seems to reflect Sumerian influence.<sup>14</sup> Old Egyptian too has iconic reduplication, but only on the orthographic level: the dual endings (-wy and -ty) are sometimes indicated by writing the singular twice, and the plural endings (-w and -wt) may be indicated by writing the singular three times.<sup>15</sup> Traces of iconic reduplication are perhaps to be found in the Semitic languages as well.<sup>16</sup> If

indebted to L. Kogan for this reference and to Huehnergard for calling the theory to my attention in the first place. For Sabaic *'l'l*t, see n. 16 below.

<sup>11</sup> C. Brockelmann, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (2 vols.; Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1908, 1913) 1:439 §240. For scholars who have reconstructed a reduplicated noun plural in Afroasiatic, see R. R. Ratcliffe, “Drift and Noun Plural Reduplication in Afroasiatic,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 59 (1996) 297. Ratcliffe himself rejects this reconstruction (*ibid.*, 309–10).

<sup>12</sup> For modern Afroasiatic (including Semitic) languages, see Ratcliffe, “Drift,” 298–309. For other languages, see G. G. Corbett, *Number* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 137, 148–49 and passim.

<sup>13</sup> D. O. Edzard, *Sumerian Grammar* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 71; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 31; cf. P. Michalowski, “Sumerian,” *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (ed. R. D. Woodard; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 33.

<sup>14</sup> C. H. Gordon, “Amorite and Eblaite,” in *The Semitic Languages* (ed. R. Hetzron; Routledge Language Family Descriptions; London: Routledge, 1997) 109.

<sup>15</sup> E. Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik* (Analecta orientalia 34/39; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1955) 117 §273, 121 §282, 124–25 §290, 126 §296. Cf. J. P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 38: “In Middle Egyptian this archaic practice was more common for duals than for plurals.”

<sup>16</sup> In Aramaic, the plural of *rab* “great” is \**rabrabīn*, with reduplication plus the plural ending; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer: samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten. Aramaistische Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Deutung, Grammatik/Wörterbuch, deutsch-aramäische Wortliste, Register* (2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984–2004) 1:689–90. In Sabaic, one plural of *'l* “god” is *'l'l*t; A. F. L. Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar* (Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph 6; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1984) 27. These examples are given already by Brockelmann, *Grundriß*, 1:439–40 §240a–b. In Akkadian, the plural of *abum* “father” is *abbū*, and the plural of *ahum* “brother” is *ahhū*—with gemination plus the plural ending; W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (3rd ed.; Analecta orientalia 33; Rome: Editrice Pontifico

so, the reduplicated divine names of the Sargonic period may exhibit a kind of plural of majesty/power.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of *Rīr-Rīr* and *imhw imhw* (PT 235), the iconic nature of the reduplication is quite obvious, for it mimics the duality of this creature. All of the evidence indicates that *Rīr-Rīr* had two heads. In the preceding utterance (PT 234), we find a reference to a female serpent “that jubilates with both of her faces” (*hknt m hrwy.s sn-nw*);<sup>18</sup> I suggest that this serpent is *Rīr-Rīr*, the mother snake. In his comment on PT 234, A. Piankoff writes: “A divine two-headed serpent is invoked as a protection. A similar serpent is represented in the Fourth Division of the *Book of Am-Duat*. . . .”<sup>19</sup> The serpent depicted in the *Book of Am-Duat* has a second head facing backwards planted on its tail, an anthropomorphic head with the beard of a god.<sup>20</sup> The caption identifies this female snake as a guardian of the road of the Imḥat Necropolis and adds that “she jubilates with both of her faces (*hknt m hrwy.s*) for the great image that is in it [the road].”<sup>21</sup> This caption is clearly

Istituto Biblico, 1995) 93 §61g. (For the Hebrew cognate of *ahbū*, see H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testamentes* [Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1922], 219 and 615–16; however, one may question their assumption that the gemination in the Hebrew form is secondary.) It may be suggested that these geminated plurals are contractions of reduplicated plurals; from a synchronic point of view, they exhibit partial reduplication (cf. Ratcliffe, “Drift,” 298–99). In other words, *abbū* and *ahbū* may be related to the reduplicated Old Akkadian names *A-bu-bu* and *A-hu-hu* discussed above. However, it should be noted that all of these are plurals of short nouns and may reflect nothing more than a tendency to augment such nouns in the plural; see at chapter 3, n. 94 below concerning augmentation with *ahāh* in the plural. Another possible vestige is the use of repetition to express distribution in all of the Semitic languages (e.g., Hebrew *ʔis ʔis*); Brockelmann, *Grundriß*, 1:439 §240a. For the relationship (synchronic and diachronic) between distributives and plurals, see Corbett, *Number*, 116.

<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to A. Gianto for this suggestion.

<sup>18</sup> A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der aegyptischen Sprache* (6 vols.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1926–63) 3:178, s.v. *hkn*, B.I.c., “rejoice in/through.” See chapter 3, n. 8 below.

<sup>19</sup> A. Piankoff, *The Pyramid of Unas* (Bollingen Series 40:5, Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations 5; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968) 97. Cf. H. Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual in den Pyramiden des Alten Reiches* (Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 24; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972) 257; C. Leitz, “Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidentexten,” *Orientalia N.S.* 65 (1996) 406.

<sup>20</sup> A. Piankoff, *The Tomb of Ramesses VI* (Bollingen Series 40:1; 2 vols.; New York: Pantheon Books, 1954) vol. 2, plate 81; E. Hornung, *Das Amduat: Die Schrift des verborgenen Raumes* (3 vols.; Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 7; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963) Schematische Übersichten, Vierte Stunde, no. 324.

<sup>21</sup> Hornung, *Amduat*, 1:73–74 (Schlange no. 324), 2:89; Piankoff, *Tomb*, 1:259. Cf. Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, 3:178–79, s.v. *hkn*, B.II. In all probability, *i-m-im-h-w* is unrelated to the necropolis name *i-m-im-h-t* (J. P. Allen, e-mail communication, October

related to PT 234 and suggests that the two-headed serpent of the latter is there to guard the king.<sup>22</sup> At the end of PT 235, we have the phrase “the two female guardians of the threshold of the door.” The context suggests that this too refers to *Rīr-Rīr*.<sup>23</sup> Both utterances seem to be alluding to an engraving of *Rīr-Rīr* standing guard at the door.<sup>24</sup> According to PT 281, *Rīr-Rīr* has multiple mouths. Last but not least, we should mention the use of the pronoun *hinnō* to refer to *Rīr-Rīr* in two of the Semitic spells (PT 281 and PT 286). This feminine pronoun is either dual or plural; it cannot be singular.<sup>25</sup>

Another feature of the divine name 333 (*Rīr-Rīr*) that is paralleled in Semitic texts of the third millennium B.C.E. is the absence of both mimation<sup>26</sup> and case endings. The absence of case endings can be inferred from the “shared consonant” in 333;<sup>27</sup> the form *Rīru-Rīru*, with no abutting, coalescing consonants, would presumably have been written 3333. In Old Akkadian, “by far the largest number of divine names up to and including the Sargonic Period are written without any case endings,”<sup>28</sup> which, of course, implies the absence of mimation as well. In Eblaite,

8, 2006). There is no reason to posit such a link since there are no early attestations of that name (Ritner, e-mail communications, October 28 and November 3, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Ritner (e-mail communication, October 27, 2008) adds: “The label for the serpents states: ‘She is in this condition/situation (lit. pattern) specifically as the protection of this road.’ Her concern is thus security.” See further chapter 3, n. 8 below.

<sup>23</sup> See pp. 23 and 32 below.

<sup>24</sup> Leitz (“Schlangensprüche,” 407; cf. 390–91) compares the long vertical serpents on the doorjamb of King Djoser, published in Z. Hawass, “A Fragmentary Monument of Djoser from Saqqara,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 80 (1984) 45–46 and in *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999) 171. (I am indebted to J. Baines for the latter reference.) See also R. K. Ritner, “O. Gardiner 363: A Spell Against Night Terrors,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1990) 25–41. The belief in snakes guarding the entrance to burial chambers seems to have survived in the area until modern times. The website of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at the Cambridge University Library reports that, until the nineteenth century, just such a belief kept collectors away from the Cairo Genizah, a burial chamber for Jewish documents located about twenty-five miles from Unas’s burial chamber.

<sup>25</sup> See p. 49 below. At the same time, the *Egyptian* spells treat the mother snake as feminine singular (Ritner, e-mail communication, October 28, 2008). See also at chapter 3, n. 44 below.

<sup>26</sup> See A. Dolgopolsky, “Two Problems of Semitic Historical Linguistics,” in *Semitic Studies: In Honor of Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of His Eighty-fifth Birthday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1991* (ed. A. S. Kaye; 2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991) 1:328–33 for the view that all names (indeed, all definite nouns) lacked mimation in Proto-Semitic.

<sup>27</sup> See n. 3 above.

<sup>28</sup> I. J. Gelb, *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar* (Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary 2; 2nd rev. ed; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 140.

too, the absolute form, without mimation or case ending, “is used to express . . . divine names” among other things.<sup>29</sup>

An important piece of evidence for our interpretation is the semantic correspondence between the bilingual phrase *333 mwt.f* in PT 232 and the purely Semitic phrase *333 imhw* in PT 235. Both phrases begin with *333*, which we have interpreted as the name of the mother snake, followed by a noun phrase—*mwt.f* “its mother” in PT 232 and *imhw* in PT 235. If the literal meaning of *imhw* is “snake’s mother,” it is semantically equivalent to the corresponding Egyptian noun phrase, because Semitic *im* = *’immu* “mother” is semantically equivalent to Eg. *mwt* “mother,” and Semitic *hw* = *hiwwi* “snake” is roughly equivalent to Eg. *f* “his/its,” a pronoun that refers to a snake in the context of PT 232.<sup>30</sup> There is also a semantic correspondence between *pr n mwt.f* “the house of its mother” in PT 237 and *b-i-ti-i = bayti* “my house,” i.e., the house of the mother snake, in PT 236.<sup>31</sup>

An intriguing parallel to *Rīr-Rīr*, the mother snake, is found in Prov 30:15a: “The leech has two daughters: *Hab Hab* [lit., Give! Give!].” According to modern commentators, the two daughters are the two suckers of the leech, one at each end.<sup>32</sup> B. K. Waltke writes that “verset Ab names its sucking organs as *Give! Give!*”<sup>33</sup> The plausibility of this claim is obvious from a comparison of Prov 30:15a with Gen 29:16 (“Laban had two daughters: the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel”), not to mention Gen 4:19 (“Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the other was Zillah”), 1 Sam 1:2 (“He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah”), and 1 Chr 4:5 (“Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives: Halah and Naarah”); cf. Gen 10:25. These parallels show that it is natural to look for names following statements like “X had/has/took two daughters/wives.” The relationship of the names *Hab Hab* to the suckers at each end of the leech is very similar to the relationship of the name *Rīr-Rīr* to the heads at each end of the mother snake. It goes without saying that the leech, which is a kind of worm, is

<sup>29</sup> J. Huehnergard and C. Woods, “Akkadian and Eblaite,” *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (ed. R. D. Woodard; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 247.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *mwt.f* in PT 237 and PT 287.

<sup>31</sup> As is well known, the Egyptian word *pr* “house” occurs as part of the word *pharaoh*, whose original meaning in Egyptian is “great house, palace.”

<sup>32</sup> W. McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970) 653; R. J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999) 265; B. K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, vol. 2, *Chapters 15–31* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 487.

<sup>33</sup> Waltke, *Proverbs: Chapters 15–31*, 487.

similar in shape to a snake. This is reflected in Egyptian orthography, where the determinative (semantic classifier) for snakes is also used for worms.<sup>34</sup>

A possible parallel to the divine mother snake that protects the king's tomb is found in a Punic inscription on a lead roll from a tomb in Carthage.<sup>35</sup> In the Greco-Roman world—including Carthage—lead rolls were inserted into graves as messages to deities connected to the underworld.<sup>36</sup> The inscription (*KAI* 89) begins with the words *rbt hwt ɻt mlkt* “O lady *hwt*, O goddess, O queen.”<sup>37</sup> It is generally agreed that this opening invokes one or more goddesses of the underworld. M. Lidzbarski argued that a serpent goddess named *Hwt* is invoked.<sup>38</sup> Some scholars have accepted this claim;<sup>39</sup> others have rejected or ignored it.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 433 (sign I14). Cf. German *Schlange* “snake, worm (of a still)” and Old English *wyrm* “serpent, worm.” (I owe the latter example to Ritner.)

<sup>35</sup> For the provenience and date, see C. A. Faraone, B. Garnand, and C. López-Ruiz, “Micah’s Mother (Judg. 17:1–4) and a Curse from Carthage (*KAI* 89): Canaanite Precedents for Greek and Latin Curses Against Thieves?” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64 (2005) 161 n. 2, 166 n. 20.

<sup>36</sup> For the Egyptian origin of this practice, see R. K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993) 179–80.

<sup>37</sup> H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (3rd ed.; 3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971–76) (= *KAI*).

<sup>38</sup> M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* (3 vols.; Giessen: J. Ricker, 1902–1915) 1:30. In his view, the name *Hwt* is identical to the biblical *Hawwāh* (LXX *Eva*). The similarity between that name and Aramaic *hivyā* “snake” has been noted since antiquity; see the ancient and modern sources cited in I. Löw, “Aramäische Schlangennamen,” in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A. Harkavy aus Anlass seines am 20. November 1905 vollendeten siebzigsten Lebensjahres* (ed. D. v. Günzburg and I. Markon; St. Petersburg, 1908) 36 (non-Hebrew section); in S. Mowinkel, לְוָיָה, in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies: Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, 20 August 1962* (ed. D. Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 101; and in A. J. Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977) 358–69. The description of Eve as *'m kl hy* (“the mother of all the living”) does bear a certain resemblance to *'m hw* (“snake’s mother”).

<sup>39</sup> G. A. Cooke, *A Text-book of North-Semitic Inscriptions: Moabite, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Jewish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903) 135; A. van den Branden, “La plaquette de malédiction de Carthage,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 45 (1969) 312; *KAI* 2:102–3; S. Ribichini, “Un episodio di magia a Cartagine nel iii secolo av. cr.,” in *Magia: Studi di storia delle religioni in memoria di Raffaela Garosi* (ed. P. Xella; Rome: Bulzoni, 1976) 155; Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 1:574.

<sup>40</sup> E. Lipiński, *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 64; Studia Phoenicia 14; Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 412–13; H.-P. Müller, “Die Tabella defixionis *KAI* 89 und die Magie des Fluches,” *Orientalia N.S.* 69 (2000) 395–96;

C. Clermont-Ganneau suggested that the opening of the inscription, which he translated “(O) Maîtresse Haouat-Allat-Milkat,” invokes Hecate *triprosōpos*, a goddess that is associated with the underworld and is usually depicted with the head of a snake as one of her three heads.<sup>41</sup> M. G. Amadasi Guzzo, who rejects Lidzbarski’s claim, discusses the possibility that this inscription is addressed to *Tnt*, “the ‘goddess’ par excellence of Carthage, the goddess that presides over the rites of the *tofet* and that is therefore connected to the beyond.”<sup>42</sup> Now, it has been proposed that the name *Tnt* (Θεύειθ, Θίνιθ) derives from *tannīn* + *t* “female dragon, monstrous female serpent” (cf. Hebrew *tannīn*, Arabic *tinnīn*, etc.).<sup>43</sup> If this etymology is correct and if KAI 89 is addressed to *Tnt*, we should consider the possibility that *hw̄t* (perhaps vocalized *hawwat* or *hiwūt*) is an epithet of *Tnt* with the meaning “female serpent.”

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M. G. Amadasi Guzzo, “Appunti sulla ‘tabella devotionis’ KAI 89 da Cartagine,” *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 20 (2003) 26–27.

<sup>41</sup> C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d’archéologie orientale* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888-) 4:90.

<sup>42</sup> Amadasi Guzzo, “Appunti,” 28 n. 15. J. A. Hackett notes (e-mail communication from Huehnergard, March 29, 2008) that there is a seventh-century inscription from Sarepta with the divine name *Tnt*—an ivory plaque with the inscription *hsml ɻz p̄l šlm bn mp̄l bn ɻzy lnt ɻrt*, which J. B. Pritchard (*Recovering Sarepta, a Phoenician City: Excavations at Sarafand, Lebanon, 1969–1974, by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978] 104–5) translates: “The statue which Shillem, son of Mapa‘al, son of ‘Izai, made for Tanit ‘Ashtart.”

<sup>43</sup> F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973) 32–33. The etymology is dismissed out of hand by Lipiński, *Dieux*, 201.

### 3. The Semitic Spells and Their Egyptian Context

The Semitic spells in the Pyramid Texts cannot be deciphered in isolation. They are embedded in Egyptian spells, and they must make sense in that context. Indeed, this axiom provides a criterion for evaluating our decipherment: the more closely the decipherment fits the Egyptian context, the more plausible it is. The decipherment presented below clarifies the Egyptian context in a number of places. Three examples should suffice.

1. In PT 235, someone turns to the snake that is about to enter the burial chamber and declares: “You have copulated with the two female guardians of the threshold of the door.” This declaration raises a number of questions: Who is speaking? Who are the two female guardians? What is the meaning of this sexual congress? The first two questions are answered by the Semitic introduction: “Utterance of *Rīr-Rīr*, Mother-Snake-Mother-Snake.” The speaker is *Rīr-Rīr*, the two-headed mother snake, who watches over the king with two sets of eyes. The third question is answered by the Semitic conclusion: “Turn aside, O my beloved!” After the sexual congress, *Rīr-Rīr* can cajole the snake into leaving, because it is now her lover.
2. In PT 237, someone or something is said to have “sped to the house of his/its mother.” The meaning is so unclear that K. Sethe translated “der nicht in das Haus seiner Mutter geflogen ist,” with the negation carrying over from the previous clause, and G. Meurer wondered if the statement referred to the temple of some goddess.<sup>1</sup> It is clarified by the Semitic command in PT 236: “Come, come to my house!” The Egyptian narrative in PT 237 relates what occurred in response to the command: the snake

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<sup>1</sup> K. Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (6 vols.; Hamburg: J. J. Augustin, 1935–62) 1:215; G. Meurer, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 189; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 279.

sped to the hole in the ground outside of the pyramid where its mother lives. The command was uttered by *Rīr-Rīr*, the mother snake (or, more probably, by the king, after magically identifying himself with *Rīr-Rīr*), to a poisonous snake about to enter the burial chamber. That the denotation of “my house” is identical to that of “the house of its mother” can be seen clearly by replacing the pronouns with the nouns to which they refer; “my house” becomes “the mother snake’s house,” and “the house of its mother” becomes “the house of the snake’s mother.”

3. In PT 286, it is related in Egyptian that the “Byblites have crawled off.” The predicate “crawled off, slithered away” (*zbnw*) hints that these “Byblites” (*Kbnw* in the plural) are snakes, but why are they called “Byblites” and why have they crawled away? The answer to these questions is given in the previous sentence, which is a Semitic command: “Hurry (plural!) away from *Rīr-Rīr*, the ones whose hand deals death.” The term “Byblites” has been taken as a metaphor for snakes, but it is now apparent that it refers quite literally to snakes from Byblos (Palestinian vipers?), who are addressed in the (Semitic) language of Byblos by the mother snake. These Byblite snakes know the religion of Byblos as well as its language. Thus, when they are told (in PT 238 and PT 282) that in attacking the king of Egypt they are really attacking *H̄y-t̄w*, the god of Byblos, there is a chance that they will listen. Another term whose use in these spells can now be explained is *h̄st/h̄zt*, occurring in PT 232 and 282 (twice). Egyptologists have long been puzzled by these apparent references to the desert, but it is now clear that the term has the nuance of “foreign land” here, and that it is used as a metaphor for foreign snakes.

In short, our decipherment brings a certain degree of cohesiveness and coherence to a group of spells that previously seemed like a hodgepodge; it is no longer possible to assert without qualification that the order of the spells is arbitrary.<sup>2</sup> There are three bilingual units, each with its own rudimentary story line:

**PT 232–38.** A poisonous foreign snake is lurking near the king’s burial chamber. The dead king, acting as snake-charmer-in-chief, tries frantically to get the snake’s attention. He calls it repeatedly, using the epithets “poison,” “you whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr*,” and “foreign land,” but it ignores him. The threshold of the door to the burial chamber is guarded by *Rīr-Rīr*, mother of all snakes. The snake is warned that it

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<sup>2</sup> Contra C. Leitz, “Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidentexten.” *Orientalia N.S.* 65 (1996) 385.

cannot hide from *Rīr-Rīr*, who has two faces, with eyes in every direction. At first, *Rīr-Rīr* tries to get rid of the snake using gentle persuasion. Having copulated with it, she coaxes her lover to leave. Then, in the king's spell, she orders the snake to come to her house. Upon hearing this command, the snake hurries to carry it out, speeding off to its mother's underground house. Having failed to kill its prey, the snake is hungry, but in its mother's house there is nothing to eat other than dirt, the food of Geb, its father.

**PT 281–82.** The king utters a spell, in a whisper that resembles the hissing of a snake. *Rīr-Rīr* is in him, he says, for the spirit of *Rīr-Rīr* has entered into him through his nose, like a fragrant perfume. Indeed, the king is not merely a vessel for *Rīr-Rīr*; he has magically transformed himself into *Rīr-Rīr*, and he can say “I am [or: we are] they.” He is the mother of all snakes, including the one that is attacking. The king points to his new reptilian mouths and genitalia as proof that the transformation is real. The king then turns to a foreign snake that wishes to eat his dead body, like a vulture. He asserts that the true target of the snake's attack is *H̄y-tȝw*, god of Byblos.

**PT 286–87.** A number of “Byblite” snakes approach the burial chamber, and *Rīr-Rīr* orders them, in their own language, to leave. The snakes obey their mother and slither away. Upon their retreat, the grateful king turns to *Rīr-Rīr*. He invokes her as the praised one of the Red Crowns and asks her to praise him. In protecting the king, she has turned her offspring into fugitives.

In the transcriptions and translations provided below, the Semitic passages are printed in bold type to distinguish them from their Egyptian context. In general, all signs in words taken to be Semitic are transcribed, even redundant signs (phonetic complements and the like) normally omitted by Egyptologists (e.g., in *ti-i*, *nw-w* and *i-m-im*). However, words written with determinatives are transcribed according to Egyptological convention. No hand-copy of the hieroglyphic text of the spells is given, since Sethe's hand-copy is conveniently available online.<sup>3</sup>

At appropriate points, a summary is inserted together with a few brief notes (for the Egyptian material) and/or a detailed philological commentary (for the Semitic material). The summaries have already appeared above, abbreviated and combined into a single story line. The vocalization provided for the Semitic spells

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter 1, n. 11 above.

is discussed only occasionally in the commentary, because its main goal is to make the texts intelligible to Semitists; it is conjectural and often controversial, and should be taken *cum grano salis*.

### PT 232

- §236a *m mti m mti mi mti mi mti*  
 Come, poison! Come, poison! Look, poison! Look, poison!<sup>4</sup>
- §236b *333 mwt.fzp-2 mi mti mi mti*  
 You whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr!* You whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr!*  
 Look, poison! Look, poison!
- §236c *i<sup>c</sup>.ti h<sub>3</sub>st n(i) m hm w(i)*  
 Be washed away for me, O (poison of a) foreign land!<sup>5</sup> Don't  
 ignore me!<sup>6</sup>

A poisonous foreign snake is lurking near the king's burial chamber. The dead king, acting as snake-charmer-in-chief, tries frantically to get the snake's attention. He calls it repeatedly, using the epithets "poison," "you whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr*," and "(poison of a) foreign land," but it ignores him. One is reminded of the Psalmist's description of the wicked: "They have venom like the venom of a snake, a deaf viper that stops its ears so as not to hear the voice of charmers or the expert mutterer of spells" (Ps 58:5–6).

### PT 233

- §237a *hr dt prt m t<sub>3</sub> hr sdt prt m nwn*  
 Fall, O serpent which came forth from the earth! Fall, O flame  
 which came forth from the Abyss!<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The translation of this line and the following one is from R. K. Ritner (e-mail communication, September 9, 2002) with slight modifications. He adds (e-mail communication, October 28, 2008): "My reading of *mti* as 'poison' follows the standard use of the phallus as the biliteral *mt* (Wb. II, pp. 167 ff.). For the word 'poison,' see *ibid.*, p. 169, esp. 169/6 as a designation for snake venom in the PT."

<sup>5</sup> The interpretation of *i<sup>c</sup>.ti* as an exclamatory stative is from Ritner (e-mail communication, May 5, 2009). For the nuance "be washed away" ("fortwaschen" = "beseitigen"), see A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der aegyptischen Sprache* (6 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926–63) 1:39, s.v. *i<sup>c</sup>j*, II. For the use of *h<sub>3</sub>st* "foreign land" as an epithet of a foreign snake, see at nn. 148–49 below.

<sup>6</sup> The translation of this last clause is from J. P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Writings from the Ancient World 23; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 18 no. 7.

<sup>7</sup> The translation of this line and the next one is from R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 55.

- §237b *iḥr zbn*  
Fall down, crawl away!

#### PT 234

- §238a *ḥr ḥr.k ḥry rit.f*  
A face is upon you, O you who are on your belly.  
*ḥz ḥr ts.k imy-nʒwt.f*  
Get down on your backbone, O you who are in your *naut*-bush.  
§238b *ḥm n ḥknt m ḥrwys sn-nw*  
Retreat before her that jubilates with both of her faces.<sup>8</sup>

The threshold of the door to the king's burial chamber is guarded by *Rīr-Rīr*, mother of all snakes. The snake is warned that it cannot hide from *Rīr-Rīr*, who has two faces, with eyes in every direction. One of the two faces will be watching the snake at any given moment;<sup>9</sup> thus, it has no choice but to retreat. The idea that snakes must behave themselves when their mother is watching is implicit also in PT 297, but there the snake's mother is identified as the goddess Nut: "Fall! Lie down! Crawl away, for your mother Nut sees you." This identification makes perfect sense in an Egyptian context, since the sky-goddess Nut is the wife of the earth-god Geb, who is the father of all snakes.<sup>10</sup> Thus, we have *mwt.k Nwt* "your mother Nut" (PT 297) contrasting with *ʒʒʒ mwt.f* "whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr*" (PT 232). The former, reflecting the native Egyptian conception, must have been used in spells addressed to native Egyptian snakes; the latter, reflecting Byblian views, would have been used in addressing an invasive species (Palestinian vipers?) from Byblos.

<sup>8</sup> The translation of PT 234 is based mainly on Sethe, *Übersetzung*, 1:210: "Ein Gesicht ist auf dir, o du der auf seinen Eingeweiden liegt, steige herab auf deinen Rückenwirbel, o du der in seinem nʒw.t-Gebüsch wohnt. Weiche zurück vor der (Schlange), die mit ihren beiden Gesichtern versehen (?) ist." In this interpretation, the two-headed serpent described as *ḥknt m ḥrwys* has a protective role, as in the *Book of Am-Duat* (see chapter 2, n. 22 above). Most later scholars translate "retreat before me, O you who . . .," based on a different interpretation of §238b: *ḥm n(i.) ḥknt m ḥrwys sn-nw* (Leitz, "Schlangensprüche," 406). This translation seems to imply that the two-headed serpent is there to attack the king. The rendering "jubilates with" is from Allen (*Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 18 no. 9), who, in turn, follows Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, 3:178.

<sup>9</sup> This is, presumably, the sense of *ḥr ḥr.k* in PT 240 (§245a), as well. There too it is addressed to the snake in the *naut*-bush. Ritner (e-mail communication, October 28, 2008) compares PT 228 §228a, where the meaning of "face falls upon face" is revealed by the parallel clause, "face having seen face."

<sup>10</sup> Meurer, *Feinde*, 288.

**PT 235**

§239a *k w 3 3 3 i m im h w i m im h w*

**ḳawwu rīr-rīr, 'immu-ḥiwwi 'immu-ḥiwwi:**

**Utterance of Rīr-Rīr, Mother-Snake-Mother-Snake:**

§239b *iw nk.n.k irti r(w)t ՚3*

You have copulated with the two female guardians of the threshold of the door.<sup>11</sup>

*n t i t t i i i 3 i<sup>12</sup>*

**niṭē, yā-dōdī, yā-’aryu!**

**Turn aside, O my beloved, O lion!**

At first, *Rīr-Rīr* tries to get rid of the snake using gentle persuasion. Having copulated with it, she coaxes her lover to leave.

*k-w* = *ḳawwu* “utterance”; cf. *kw kbbh* = *ḳawwu kabōbihu* “the uttering of his spell” in PT 281 (below) and *ḳaww-* in Ps 19:5, parallel to *mille-* “words” and translated φθόγγος “sound, voice, speech, utterance” by the Septuagint.<sup>13</sup> Egyptian *k* = Semitic *k* is found also in *kbb* = *kabōbu* (see below). In the New Kingdom, Semitic *k* is usually rendered by Egyptian *k* or *g*, but renderings with *k* are occasionally found in initial position;<sup>14</sup> see chapter 4 below.

*3-3-3 = Rīr-Rīr*. As noted above, this name is based on the noun *\*rīrum* “spittle” attested in Hebrew and Aramaic as *rīr* and in Arabic as *rayrun*. It is no doubt used here of venom, as is Egyptian *t̄f* “spittle” in PT 237.<sup>15</sup> So too in Akkadian, both snakes and humans have *illātu* “saliva”;<sup>16</sup> and *imtu* has the meanings (1) “poisonous foam, slaver produced from the mouth of angry gods, demons, humans and ani-

<sup>11</sup> The translation of this line is from Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Aside from the phonetic complement *i* following bilsiteral *ti*, there is no reason to collapse signs, as does Leitz (Ritner, e-mail communication, September 30, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> According to one view, *kaw* in Isa 28:10, 13 belongs here as well. For some possible postbiblical attestations of this word, see D. Boyarin, IV מהרים in ליליטיקון התלמודי בבערבית ובערבית: ספר זיכרון לדב עירון (Te’udah 6; ed. A. Dotan; Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1988) 64–66. (I am indebted to C. Cohen for reminding me of this article.)

<sup>14</sup> J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 411.

<sup>15</sup> For the latter, see Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56; cf. also Leitz, “Schlangensprüche,” 388; and (for a fuller treatment) R. K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993) 84–85.

<sup>16</sup> CAD (*Assyrian Dictionary* [Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–]) vol. 7 (I–J), 85. Cf. I. L. Finkel, “On Some Dog, Snake and Scorpion Incantations,” in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. T.

mals”; (2) “poison”; (3) “spittle.”<sup>17</sup> In Sumerian, too, *uš* “spittle” is frequently used of snake venom, for example, “you spit your venom at evil like a snake that drools poison” and “it will produce venom for me like a snake that dribbles poison.”<sup>18</sup> The use of the same word for “spittle” and “venom” should hardly be surprising. The venom glands of snakes are specialized salivary glands, and the venom of snakes is a modified form of saliva.<sup>19</sup> A different word for “spittle,” *rukkum* (= Hebrew *rōk*), is found in the London Medical Papyrus.<sup>20</sup> As the Rabbis made clear in discussing Lev 15:8,<sup>21</sup> the two nouns are not completely synonymous in Hebrew. The usual assumption is that *rīr* is slaver (drool) that dribbles out of the mouth, while *rōk* refers primarily to sputum that one expectorates.<sup>22</sup> In Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, *rīrā* is used of other liquid secretions,<sup>23</sup> and the Biblical Hebrew verb *rār* is used of genital discharges in Lev 15:3. Thus, the name *Rīr-Rīr* does not imply that the mother snake was a spitting cobra or the like.

*h-w* = *hiwwi* “snake (gen.”); cf. Aramaic *hiwyā* “snake,” Arabic *hayyatun* “id.” < \**hawyatun*,<sup>24</sup> and, less certainly, Punic *hw̄t*, Biblical Hebrew *Hawwāh*

Abusch and K. van der Toorn, Ancient Magic and Divination 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1999) 226–27.

<sup>17</sup> CAD vol. 7 (I–J), 139–41.

<sup>18</sup> See c.1.8.2.1 (Lugalbanda in the mountain cave) and c.2.1.7 (The building of Ningirsu’s temple; Gudea cylinders A and B) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk).

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., R. L. Lewis and L. Gutmann, “Snake Venoms and the Neuromuscular Junction,” *Seminars in Neurology* 24 (2004) introduction.

<sup>20</sup> R. C. Steiner, “The London Medical Papyrus,” in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 328–29.

<sup>21</sup> See *Sifra* (Weiss ed., 76c; Finkelstein ed. [Codex Assemani 66], 320 l. 10) and *Tosefta* (Zavin 5:2; Zuckerman ed., 679 ll. 28–29).

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the distinction is connected with the two products of the salivary glands: a serous secretion and a mucous secretion. The latter is thick, while the former is more liquid.

<sup>23</sup> See M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 1078, s.v. According to M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (2 vols.; London: Luzac; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1903) 1477b, s.v., this noun is used of snake venom in Galilean Aramaic, but cf. M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in the Byzantine Period* (2nd ed.; Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 524, s.v. *ryryn*.

<sup>24</sup> See T. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1904) 87 n. 2; I. Löw, “Aramäische Schlangennamen,” in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A.*

“Eve,” *hištahwāh* “prostrate oneself.”<sup>25</sup> For the form, it is tempting to compare Ugaritic *dw* “sick person” from the root *d-w-y*,<sup>26</sup> but, as J. Huehnergard reminds me,<sup>27</sup> this reflects a different vowel pattern. The Arabic cognate shows that the polyphonic initial letter of the Aramaic is to be read *h* rather than *h̄*.<sup>28</sup> The absence of final *i* seems to point to a form exhibiting progressive assimilation: *hiww-* < *hiwy-*. This form may be compared to some of the *y*-less forms of the word for “snake” attested in Aramaic, e.g., Galilean Aramaic *hw* (absolute singular?), *hw̄n* (absolute plural), Targum Onqelos *hiwwīn*, *hīwāwān* (absolute plural), Syriac *hwāwāṭā*, etc.<sup>29</sup> According to T. Nöldeke, Hebrew has three examples of \**wy* > *ww* (instead of the usual \**wy* > *yy*): (1) *Hawwāh* “Eve” < \**hiwy-* “snake”,<sup>30</sup> (2) *’awwāh* “craving” < \**awyāh* (from the root *’-w-y* “desire”); (3) *hawwāh* “craving?” < \**hawyāh* (cf. Arabic *hawā* “love, craving” from the root *h-w-y* “love” and Ugaritic *h-w-y* “desire”?).<sup>31</sup> To these, we may add: (4) *’awwāh* “ruin-heap” (alongside *’ī* and the toponyms *’ayyāh*, *’ay*, etc.) < \**’awyāh* (from the root *’-w-y*

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*Harkavy aus Anlass seines am 20. November vollendeten siebzigsten Lebensjahres* (ed. D. v. Günzburg and I. Markon; St. Petersburg, 1908) 35–37. Verbal forms like *tahawwā* “coil up (of snakes)” and *ḥāwī* “owner of snakes” preserve the original medial *w* of the root; see E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863–77) 679 cols. a–c. For Arabic *yy* < *wy*, cf. *rayy-/riyy-* “saturation,” *kayy-* “burning,” and *siyy-* “the like of.”

<sup>25</sup> See C. Cohen, “The Saga of a Unique Verb in Hebrew and Ugaritic: הַשְׁתַחַווּ ‘to Bow Down’ — Usage and Etymology,” <http://www.umass.edu/judaic/anniversaryvolume/articles/24-E1-CCohen.pdf>. (I am indebted to A. Koller for this reference.) See also n. 73 below.

<sup>26</sup> G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (2nd rev. ed.; Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 67; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003) 284, s.v. *dw*.

<sup>27</sup> E-mail communication, March 29, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Steiner, “On the Dating,” 230–37.

<sup>29</sup> J. Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* (4 vols.; Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876–83) 2:19, s.v. *hew*; D. Talshir, *שמות בעלי החיים בתרגום הארמי של השומרונים* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1981) 68–69. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, Talshir assumed that these forms developed late.

<sup>30</sup> For the view that the name is related to the Aramaic word for “snake,” see chapter 2, n. 38 above.

<sup>31</sup> Nöldeke, *Beiträge*, 87 n. 2; and Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary*, 350, s.v. *h-w-y*.

“become corrupted”).<sup>32</sup> If (3) is correct,<sup>33</sup> we have one example for each of the four laryngeal consonants.

*i-m-im-h-w* = *?immu-hiwvi* “mother snake (lit., snake’s mother).” Important evidence for this interpretation comes from PT 232, 237, 287, and 297, which contain the Egyptian word for “his mother,” *mwt.f*. Clearly that is an important theme in this group of spells. In PT 232, we have 333 *mwt.f* “whose mother is *Rīr-Rīr*.” As noted above, it seems clear that this is parallel to 333 *i-m-im-h-w* “*Rīr-Rīr*, mother snake (lit., the snake’s mother)” here (not to mention *mwt.k Nwt* “your mother Nut” in PT 297).<sup>34</sup> Another important parallel to *?immu-hiwvi* is Sumerian  *AMA-ušum*, a name applied to Dumuzi by Inana in Sumerian love songs.<sup>35</sup> The name is composed of two well-known Sumerian words, *ama* “mother” and *ušum* “snake.” The fullest form of the name is  *AMA-ušum-gal-an-na*, in which the final components are *gal* “great” (or *ušumgal* “great snake, dragon”) and *an-na* “of heaven.”<sup>36</sup> It is attested already in the Fara period.<sup>37</sup> The mythological background of the name is unknown, but it is believed to have originally belonged to a deity distinct from Dumuzi.<sup>38</sup> It is impossible to prove that the expressions *?immu-hiwvi* and  *AMA-ušum(-gal-an-na)* have a common origin, but if they do we are

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the roots *s-r-h* and *š-h-t*, also used of both physical and moral corruption, especially offense against a king.

<sup>33</sup> For the controversy concerning the meaning of *hawwāh* (especially in Prov 10:3), see E. L. Greenstein, “Another Attestation of Initial *h* > *?* in West Semitic,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973) 157–64; and Y. Avishur, על הפועל בערבית “במקרה לאור טקסת אוגריתי חדש” והות רשות “גוזר” ועל “הות רשות” במשמעותם, *Lešonenu* 71 (2009) 64–65. I am indebted to Huehnergard for reminding me of the former article.

<sup>34</sup> See pp. 20 and 27 above.

<sup>35</sup> See Y. Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzid-Inanna Songs* (Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998) 74–75 and passim. The texts are also available in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk): t.4.08.18 (Dumuzid-Inana R) Version A, 20-28; t.4.08.26 (Dumuzid-Inana Z) Segment B, 1-9; t.4.08.29 (Dumuzid-Inana C1) Segment D, 1-4.

<sup>36</sup> For various interpretations of the term, see Sefati, *Love Songs*, 74 n. 91; M. M. Fritz, “... und weinten um Tammuz”: *Die Götter Dumuzi—Ama-ušumgal-anna und Damu* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 307; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003) 269–71; and M. Krebernik, “Drachenmutter und Himmelsrebe? Zur Frühgeschichte Dumuzis und seiner Familie,” in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke* (ed. W. Sallaberger et al.; Orientalia Biblica et Christiana 14; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003) 153–56. I am indebted to L. Kogan for the last reference.

<sup>37</sup> Fritz, *Tammuz*, 55–56; cf. F. Pomponio, “The Fara Lists of Proper Names,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984) 554.

<sup>38</sup> Krebernik, “Drachenmutter,” 154 n. 19; Sefati, *Love Songs*, 74.

dealing with an extremely ancient concept, whose Sumerian reflex would mean “(great) mother-snake (of heaven).” Another possible parallel comes from the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions (fifteenth century B.C.E.). According to W. F. Albright’s decipherment, a goddess named *dt bñ* “Serpent Lady (lit., She of the Serpent)” appears in four of those inscriptions.<sup>39</sup>

*nk.n.k* “you have copulated.” The masculine singular addressee appears to be the snake.

*n-t(-i)* = *nitē-* “turn aside”; cf. 2 Sam 2:21 *n<sup>r</sup>tēh* “turn aside (to the right or to the left).” In the New Kingdom, the rendering of Semitic *t* varies between Egyptian *d* and *t*, sometimes in transcriptions of the same word;<sup>40</sup> see also chapter 4 below. For the final vowel, see the discussion of *i-ti-i-ti-i* = *?itē ?itē* below. If that vowel was really long (as assumed in the transcription), the absence of final *i* here may be explained by the fact that the next word begins with *y*. The scribe may have heard the two as a single word, pronounced [nitēyā], requiring him to write *i* only once.

*i* = *yā-* “O,” the Semitic vocative particle; cf. Arabic *yā*, Ugaritic *y*, Deir Alla *y*, Official Aramaic (Ahikar) *yh*, Syriac *yā* and Mandaic *ia*.<sup>41</sup> In Egyptian, too, *i* is an interjection that can function as a vocative particle.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, two of the occurrences of *i* in the continuation of this spell have, in the past, been wrongly identified with that Egyptian particle.<sup>43</sup>

*t-ti-i* = *dōdī* “my beloved,” cf. Biblical Hebrew *dōq̄tī* “my beloved,” Ugaritic *ddh* “her beloved.” The term can refer to a lover, and its use here, following “you have copulated with the two female guardians . . . ,” seems to imply that *Rīr-Rīr* is to be identified with the two female guardian snakes. In the Semitic passages of the first series of snake spells (here and in PT 236), *Rīr-Rīr* refers to herself using the singular pronoun “my” (just as the Egyptian spells refer to her using singular

<sup>39</sup> W. F. Albright, *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Harvard Theological Studies 22; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966) 19–20 (no. 351), 21–22 (no. 353), 24–25 (no. 360), 25 (no. 361).

<sup>40</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 276–78 (no. 397), 407.

<sup>41</sup> See the standard dictionaries of those languages s.v. and also Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 521, s.v. For the claim that this particle existed in Hebrew as well, see J. Tropper, “Die Vokativpartikel *yāh* im Hebräischen,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 15/16 (2002/2003) 168–71. I am indebted to Huehnergard for this reference.

<sup>42</sup> Sethe, *Übersetzung*, 6:86; J. R. Ogdon, “Studies in Ancient Egyptian Magical Thought IV: An Analysis of the ‘Technical’ Language in the Anti-Snake Magical Spells of the Pyramid Texts,” *Discussions in Egyptology* 13 (1989) 59–61. Sethe records one occurrence in the Pyramid Texts of Egyptian *i* as a vocative particle and other occurrences as an interjection.

<sup>43</sup> Ogdon, “Studies,” 61–62, 70 n. 24.

“she”),<sup>44</sup> but in the Semitic passages of the second series of snake spells (PT 281 and 286), the king refers to *Rīr-Rīr* using the dual or plural pronoun “they”; this may be another indication of the separate origin of the two series.<sup>45</sup> In the New Kingdom, Semitic *d* is usually rendered by Egyptian *d*, but renderings with *t* are occasionally found.<sup>46</sup> The rendering of Semitic *d* with Old Egyptian *t* is paralleled by the rendering of Semitic *g* with Old Egyptian *k* in *Gbl > Kbn* “Byblos.”<sup>47</sup> For an explanation of these renderings, see chapter 4 below. Note the *mater lectionis* in this word; like most of the *matres lectionis* in these spells, it represents a long high vowel in word-final position.<sup>48</sup>

*i t-i'-i = yā-dōdī* “O my beloved”; cf. the familiar Arabic phrase *yā habībī* with the same meaning.

*i i-ʒ-i = yā-ʒaryu* “O lion”; cf. Biblical Hebrew *ṣ̄rī* “lion” < \**ṣ̄aryu*, Biblical Aramaic *ṣ̄aryēh* “lion,” Old Aramaic (Sefire) *ṣ̄ryh* “lion,” Tigre *ṣ̄arwe* “serpent,” and Geez *ṣ̄arwe mādr* “serpent (lit., beast of the ground).”<sup>49</sup> This noun may occur in New Kingdom texts, as well.<sup>50</sup> Egyptian terms for “lion” are used as epithets for snakes in other Pyramid Texts, e.g., PT 292 below. Sumerian incantations contain references to “the lion, the fearsome snake which lives in the centre of the sea” and to “a lion with the face of the fearsome snake.”<sup>51</sup> In both Mesopotamian and

<sup>44</sup> See chapter 2, n. 25 above.

<sup>45</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 14–15 above and at chapter 4, n. 17 below.

<sup>46</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 169–70 (no. 224), 406.

<sup>47</sup> Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, 5:118; P. E. Newberry, “Three Old-Kingdom Travellers to Byblos and Pwenet,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938) 182.

<sup>48</sup> For the earliest use of *i* and *w* as *matres lectionis* (vowel letters) in Egyptian, see Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 491.

<sup>49</sup> W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge'ez-English, English-Ge'ez, with an Index of Semitic Roots* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987) 40. Cf. Akkadian *nēšu ša kakkarī* “lion of the earth” (*Gilgamesh Epic*) and Eblaite *na-iš gār-gārī-im* “id.” (Ebla list of animals). For the controversy concerning these epithets (chameleon vs. snake; earth vs. netherworld), see N. Roudik, “*alap erisetim* and *nēšu ša kakkarī*: Animals of the Ground or Beasts of the Netherworld,” in *Studia Semitica* (Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2003) 382–83; L. Kogan, “Animal Names in Biblical Hebrew: An Etymological Overview,” *Babel und Bibel* 3 (2006) 294; and the literature cited there.

<sup>50</sup> See T. Schneider, “Mag. pHarris XII,1–5: Eine kanaanäische Beschwörung für die Löwenjagd?” *Göttinger Miszellen* 112 (1989) 57, 62; Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 28–29 (no. 17); W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (2nd ed.; Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971) 507.

<sup>51</sup> G. Cunningham, “*Deliver Me from Evil*”: *Mesopotamian Incantations 2500–1500 BC* (Studia Pohl, Series Maior 17; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1997) 89.

Egyptian art, composite lion-serpent creatures are found from the earliest times.<sup>52</sup> The fact that the Semitic term appears here in apposition to *dōdī* “my beloved,” as a term of endearment, might suggest that it too has the first-person singular possessive suffix and should be read *'aryī* “my lion.”<sup>53</sup> However, for *'aryī* (and *'aryēh*) we would expect *i-3-i-i*. Furthermore, the snake is addressed as “O lion” in PT 287. For the rendering of initial *'* with *i* (reed-leaf), see chapter 4 below.

*n-t(-i) i t-ti-i = niṭē yā dōdī* “turn aside, O my beloved,” cf. Song 2:17 *sōb . . . dōdī* “turn . . . , my beloved” and Song 8:14 *b̄rah dōdī* “flee/hurry, my beloved.”

*n-t(-i) i t-ti-i i i-3-i = niṭē-yā-dōdī yā-'aryū* “turn aside, O my beloved, O lion.” Note that this sentence contains a sequence of three consecutive reed-leafs. When I first encountered this passage, I despaired of finding an interpretation for this sequence. The key to deciphering this sequence is the recognition that reed-leaf has three realizations: [ī], [y], and ['].

### PT 236

§240    *k b b h i tī i tī i b i tī i*

***kabōbuhu: 'itē, 'itē baytī***

**His spell: “Come, come to my house.”**

*ss s3 hifgt rn.k pw*

“Cord” (=Snake) son of “Mother’s Milk” is this name of yours.<sup>54</sup>

In the king’s spell, the snake is ordered by *Rīr-Rīr* to come to her house. The snake is given a metaphoric name designed to remind him that *Rīr-Rīr* is his mother.

<sup>52</sup> T. J. Lewis, “CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996) 34–36.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *yōnātī* “my dove” in Song 5:2; 6:9.

<sup>54</sup> The rendering “Cord” is from Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 18 no. 11. Ritner (e-mail communication, April 24, 2009) supplied the rendering “Mother’s Milk” and the following discussion: “For ‘cord/line’ a reasonable epithet for a snake, see Wb. IV, 539/4 etc. (used of ship’s tackle, etc.). This is also the translation of Allen on p. 18. There is no certain parallel for the fem. *hifgt*, but there is a Ptolemaic feminine word *hfk(t)* seemingly meaning ‘milk from the udder’ in Wb. III, 75/4. This is a large time gap, but the phonetics fit. By the late periods, the switch between *g* and *k* is common, and the loss of the medial *i* in *hifgt > hfk(t)* is no problem; see the *hiknw* (§242c) vs. *hknw* (§423b) spellings. If both interpretations are true, this adds a slight nuance of shipping (as does ‘Rir-Rir of the sea’) and (however one translates the feminine *hifgt*) stresses the maternal parentage of the snake—the whole theme of the rite.” For the rendering “is this name of yours,” I am indebted to J. Baines (e-mail communication, February 12, 2009). R. Bertrand’s rendering (*Les Textes de la Pyramide d’Ounas* [Beuvrages: ANOUP, 2004] 78) is similar: “est ce nom qui est le tien.”

*k-b-b-h<sup>55</sup>* = *kabōbu* “his spell,” a verbal noun of the root *k-b-b*; cf. *kw kbbh* = *kawwu kabōbihu* “the uttering of his spell” in PT 282 below. In the latter place at least, the pronoun appears to refer to the king transformed into *Rīr-Rīr*; the pronoun used (in the second series of snake spells) to refer to *Rīr-Rīr* herself in the third person is *hinnō*. The *h* is unelided, as in early Old Byblian (*KAI* 1, *Aḥīrōm*, ca. 1000 B.C.E.): *’bh* “his father” (l. 1), *mšptḥ* “his justice” (l. 2), *mlkh* “his kingship” (l. 2), *sprh* “his inscription” (l. 2).<sup>56</sup> The absence of *w* at the end, here and in PT 281, suggests that the final *u* is short. The root *k-b-b* “curse, hex” occurs in Biblical Hebrew (with reference to Balaam, the sorcerer, etc.) and Phoenician-Punic.<sup>57</sup> *HALOT*’s gloss of the root is “to curse, enchant (presumably accompanied by acts of magic).”<sup>58</sup> In the story of Balaam, as in our text, the goal is to prevent the king’s enemy from harming him. For the rendering of Semitic *k* with Egyptian *k*, see the discussion of *k-w* = *kawwu* above and chapter 4 below.

*i-ti-i-ti-i* = *’itē ’itē* “come, come.” The verb *’t-w/y* “come” is attested in most of the West Semitic languages. The imperative is also found (in the plural) in the scorpion spell from Wadi Hammamat (l. 4: *z-t-w*) and (in the singular) in the Aramaic papyrus in Demotic script (XX/5 and XXI/4: *e-t-z'*).<sup>59</sup> The apparent inconsistency in the spelling of the two iterations of the imperative *i-ti* vs. *i-ti-i* with a phonetic complement is explained by Egyptian scribal practice.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> The final *h* is written on the same line as the initial *i* of *i-ti-i-ti-i*, even though there seems to be a word boundary between them. When two signs are written side by side (instead of one below the other) in the Pyramid Texts, they normally belong to the same word, but exceptions are not uncommon; see K. Sethe, *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908–22) 4:17. If such exceptions are found in Egyptian passages understood by the engravers, it should not surprise us to find them in Semitic passages.

<sup>56</sup> H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (3rd ed.; 3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971–76) 1:1; W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 54, 101; J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik* (Analecta orientalia 55; 3rd ed. rev. M. G. Amadasi Guzzo and W. R. Mayer; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1999) 66.

<sup>57</sup> Hoftijzer and Jongeling, *Dictionary*, 977–78.

<sup>58</sup> L. Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; 5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000) 1060, s.v. *ḳbb* II (= *HALOT*).

<sup>59</sup> R. C. Steiner, “The Scorpion Spell from Wadi Hammamat: Another Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 60 (2001) 260, 264; R. C. Steiner and C. F. Nims, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Revue Biblique* 92 (1985) 75, 78.

<sup>60</sup> I am indebted to J. P. Allen for calling my attention to this inconsistency. In an e-mail communication (October 17, 2006), he refers me to E. Edel’s discussion of haplography:

*b-i-ti-i = baytī* “my house.” This Semitic phrase has the same referent as *pr n mwtf* “the house of its mother” in the next utterance (PT 237). The house of *Rīr-Rīr*, Mother Snake, is a hole in the ground,<sup>61</sup> outside of the pyramid, far from the king’s mummy. Here again *Rīr-Rīr* uses singular “my” instead of plural “our.” The use of medial *i* in *b-i-ti-i* but not in *ȝ-ȝ-ȝ* may reflect the preservation of the diphthong in the former. Contrast *kè-e-sí* “summer” and *hi-na-ia* “my eyes” in Amarna letters from Byblos and Sidon (131:15 and 144:17).<sup>62</sup>

*i-ti-i-ti-i b-i-ti-i = ȝitē-ȝitē baytī* “come, come to my house.” The absence of a preposition here with the meaning “to” is not at all unexpected in a text this old; even in Official Aramaic, the verb *ȝty* “come” can still take a direct object, for example, *ȝnh[ ȝ]tyt bytk* “I came to your house.”<sup>63</sup> So too in Classical Arabic, for example, *ȝatā l-Baṣrata*.<sup>64</sup> A similar construction is found in Biblical Hebrew (Josh 6:22; Pss 5:8; 66:13; etc.), in Ugaritic (*KTU* 1.21 II 1, 9; 1.22 II 3, etc. *lk bty* “go/come to my house”), and in early Old Byblian (Ahīrōm inscription, 1. 2 *ȝly gbl* “comes up against Byblos”). For the repetition of the imperative to express urgency, cf. 2 Sam 16:7 *ȝeȝ ȝeȝ* “leave, leave” and *m. Yoma* 6:4 *tōl w<sup>e</sup>ȝeȝ tōl w<sup>e</sup>ȝeȝ* “take (it/them) and leave, take (it/them) and leave.” As noted above, the house in question is a hole in the ground outside of the pyramid, far from the king’s mummy. The goal of many spells in this series is to drive the snake back into the earth, for example, “O earth, swallow up what went forth from you” (PT 226), “slide into the earth” (PT 227), “your poison-fangs(?) be in the earth, your ribs be

“Häufig werden zwei gleiche Zeichen aufeinanderfolgender Wörter nur einmal geschrieben” (*Altägyptische Grammatik* [Analecta orientalia 34/39; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1955/1964] 44 §102). Ritner (e-mail communication, October 28, 2008) writes that “ti+i or ti could be just the same phonetic rendering; it is not just the scribe but the system that is inconsistent.”

<sup>61</sup> See n. 68 below.

<sup>62</sup> See now S. Izre’el, “Canaanite Varieties in the Second Millennium BC: Can We Dispense with Anachronism?” *Orient* 38 (2003) 89; and (for the two Old Canaanite reflexes of \*ay) R. C. Steiner, “On the Monophthongization of \*ay to i in Phoenician and Northern Hebrew and the Preservation of Archaic/Dialectal Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization,” *Orientalia N.S.* 76 (2007) 73–83. I am indebted to A. Koller for the former reference.

<sup>63</sup> B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt: Newly Copied, Edited and Translated into Hebrew and English* (Texts and Studies for Students; Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986–99) 2:30–33 (B2.6 1. 3); A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923; repr., Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967) 44, 47 (no. 15 1. 3); Hofijzer and Jongeling, *Dictionary*, 135.

<sup>64</sup> N. Kinberg, “Notes on the Shift from Accusative Constructions to Prepositional Phrases in Hebrew and Arabic,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44 (1981) 12. I am indebted to A. Koller for this reference.

in the hole” (PT 230), and “O serpent which came forth from the earth” (PT 233). The most important parallel is discussed immediately below.

### PT 237

§241a *tf i.tm im ibw zkr ir pr n mwt.f*

The spittle has come to naught; that which is in the dust(?)<sup>65</sup>  
has sped to the house of its mother.<sup>66</sup>

§241b *hiw sdr*

Monster, lie down.<sup>67</sup>

Upon hearing the command, the snake (portrayed as spittle = venom in the dust) hurries to carry it out, speeding off to its mother’s underground house.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the first sentence of PT 237 (§241a) describes the effect of the spell in PT 236.

### PT 238

§242a *t n it.k n.k iki-nhy*

The bread of your father is for you, you whose attack has failed!<sup>69</sup>

§242b *t.k ntk n it.k n.k ik-nhy*

Your own bread of your father is for you, you whose attack has failed!

§242c *nbw hiknw H<sup>c</sup>y-t3w k3.k pw nn w3š irrw n<n> rf<sup>70</sup>*

<sup>65</sup> The conjectural rendering “dust,” based on the pellet determinatives of *ibw*, is from Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56.

<sup>66</sup> The general interpretation of this line is from Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 18 no. 12. Cf. Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56: “which has fled into.” Many earlier scholars follow Sethe, who translates “der nicht in das Haus seiner Mutter geflogen ist,” with the negation carrying over from the previous clause (see at n. 1 above).

<sup>67</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 56; Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 18 no. 12.

<sup>68</sup> This interpretation is a modification of Faulkner’s (*Pyramid Texts*, 56): “... ‘spittle’, i.e., poison, is apparently used of a snake on the basis of *pars pro toto*; the snake is rendered powerless and lies in the dust. On this view of the spell, ‘your (lit., ‘his’) mother’s house’ will be the snake’s hole.”

<sup>69</sup> The translation of this line and the two following ones is from Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 18 no. 13, with slight changes. According to this interpretation, the literal meaning of *iki-nhy* is “O Failed-attack” (Ritner, e-mail communication, October 28, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> The reading *rf* is from Allen (e-mail communication, January 3, 2007). Ritner (e-mail communication, November 4, 2008) notes that this transliteration tacitly corrects Sethe’s copy from *ir:f* to *rf* based on the parallel in PT 282 §423c and adds that the hieroglyphs for

The Gold of Jubilation, The One that Appears in Flame (*H̄y-tʒw*)—that is your bull, the esteemed one against whom this [= your attack] is done.<sup>71</sup>

The snake, having failed to kill its prey, goes home hungry. In its mother's house, there is nothing to eat but its father's food. It has not been noted that, since the father of snakes is Geb, the earth god (PT 385), the food in question is probably dirt.<sup>72</sup> In the Bible, snakes are depicted as eating dirt/dust, either literally or figuratively.<sup>73</sup> As noted above, *H̄y-tʒw* is a divine name or epithet connected with Lebanon, especially Byblos. Its use here (and in PT 282), in addressing a poisonous snake, should probably be interpreted in the light of the term "Byblites," used of the fleeing snakes in PT 286.

The texts that follow belong to the second series of serpent spells, located mainly on the east wall of the antechamber. Some of these too have often been considered incomprehensible.

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the final *ir:f*(PT 238) and *r:f*(PT 282) are similar in shape. The emendation of *n* to *n<n>* is Ritner's suggestion based on the same parallel.

<sup>71</sup> Allen (e-mail communication, January 3, 2007) explains that "Gold of Jubilation" is "an epithet of the sun (which is 'gold' and at whose appearance there is 'jubilation')." The following phrase is also an epithet of the sun. Thus, the spell says that the sun is the bull (cf. Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 427, s.v. *Bull*) and the esteemed one against whom the snake's attack on the king is really directed.

<sup>72</sup> For a different interpretation of what Meurer (*Feinde*, 282) calls "diese schwierige Stelle," see Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 62 n. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. "and dust shall you eat ('āpār tō'kal) all the days of your life" (Gen 3:14); "as for the serpent, dust ('āpār) shall be its bread" (Isa 65:25); "let them lick dust ('āpār) like serpents" (Mic 7:17). When used of humans, eating/licking dust is a topos of humiliation, derived from the practice of making defeated enemies grovel with their faces (and mouths) in the dirt; cf. "they shall bow to you (*yištah*"wū), face to the ground, and lick the dust of your feet" (Isa 49:23); "let the desert-dwellers kneel before him, and his enemies lick the dust" (Ps 72:9); "let him put his mouth in the dust" (Lam 2:29); and "let our enemies see (this) and eat dust (*tīkalū epra*)" (Amarna 100:36). This may well be true in Gen 3:14 as well, as argued already (based on the parallels in the Bible and Amarna letters) by A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906) 216; cf. M. L. Barré, "A Cuneiform Parallel to Ps 86:16–17 and Mic 7:16–17," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982) 271–75. In Isa 65:25, on the other hand, the phrase is apparently used literally: in the end of days, the snake will eat dirt and will no longer bite animals and humans. Note that the verb meaning "bow down" in Isa 49:23 is thought by some to be derived from the noun for "snake" used in Aramaic and Arabic and in our spells; see n. 25 above.

**PT 281**

- §422a *i z z h k w k b b h 3 3 3 b i  
'asōsuḥu, ḥawwū ḫabōbiḥu: Rīr-Rīr biya.*  
**His whispering, the uttering of his spell: “Rīr-Rīr are in me.**
- §422b *rw n p h tī i rw n p tī i p h tī i p tī i  
ri'ū-na' pāhōtī, ri'ū-na' putī/putōtī—pāhōtī, putī/putōtī.  
See my mouths, see my pudendum/pudenda—my mouths,  
my pudendum/pudenda.*
- §422c *m mi<sup>74</sup> n i(w)nw 3 3 3 t w b s i(w)f w i(w)nw hnw  
miya-ni 'anō/ū? Rīr-Rīr, tu/iwbu tūu 'appi—  
wa'anō/ū hinnō.  
Who am/are I/we? Rīr-Rīr, fragrant perfume of the nose,  
am/are I/we [lit., I/we am/are they].”*
- §422d *n'y n'y n'y n'y  
Go! Go! N'y-snake! N'y-snake!*

The king utters a spell, in a whisper that resembles the hissing of a snake. *Rīr-Rīr* is in him, he says in the snakes’ language, for the spirit of *Rīr-Rīr* has entered into him through his nose, like a fragrant perfume. He can now speak to hostile snakes in her name. A similar idea is found in a spell for curing snakebite from a later period, addressed to Horus:

I have spoken in your name, I have recited with your magic, I have spoken with your spells, I have conjured with your conjurations, which your heart has devised—they are your sorcery—which have come forth from your mouth, which your father Geb has entrusted to you, which your mother Nut has given to you, which you have been taught by the Majesty of the Foremost One of Letopolis in order to ensure your protection, to renew your safeguarding, to close the mouth of any reptile which is in heaven, which is in the earth, which is in the water, to keep the people alive. . .<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> The second sign is so read by B. Mathieu, “Modifications de texte dans la pyramide d’Ounas,” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* 96 (1996) 306; and by Ritner (e-mail communication, September 30, 2002). Leitz (“Schlangensprüche,” 415) reads *di*.

<sup>75</sup> J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Nisaba 9; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 84; I have deleted the Egyptian words inserted by the translator in parentheses. For this text, see now R. K. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period* (Writings from the Ancient World 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 68–74 esp. p. 70.

The idea that the king speaks the language of snakes has a (remote) parallel in a later temple text, which states that the king knows the secret language that is spoken by baboons.<sup>76</sup> When the king speaks their language, he becomes one of them.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, the king is not merely a vessel for *Rīr-Rīr*; he has magically transformed himself into *Rīr-Rīr*, and he can say “I am they.” He is the mother of all snakes, including the one that is attacking. So too in PT 296 (cf. PT 385), the king says “I am Geb,” who, as noted above, is the father of all snakes, including the one that is attacking. Another close parallel to this text is PT 317, where the king becomes the crocodile god, saying “I am Sobk, green of plume, watchful of face, raised of brow. . . . I appear as Sobk son of Neith, I eat with my mouth, I urinate and copulate with my phallus. . . .”<sup>78</sup> In both spells (PT 281 and 317), the king points to his new reptilian mouth(s) and genitalia, to the exclusion of all other bodily organs; the fact that they are functioning is apparently offered as proof that the transformation of a dead king into a living reptile is no illusion.

*i-z-z-h* = *'asōsuhu* “his whispering,” a verbal noun of the root *'s-s/h-s-s*; cf. Arabic *hasīsun* “whispering” and Biblical Hebrew *hāssū* “hush!” (Neh 8:11). Like English *hiss*, these Semitic roots may have originated as an onomatopoeia imitating the sound of the snake. So too in Egyptian, one common word for “snake/reptile” is *ddf.t* “one who says *ft*,” with *ft* mimicking the hissing sound.<sup>79</sup> It is possible that *'ss* is the older form and that *hss* is a later attempt to imitate whispering as well as hissing.<sup>80</sup> In Akkadian, *azū* is used of a wide variety of sounds including the hissing of a lizard, while *azāzu* is used of the noise perceived by patients suffering

<sup>76</sup> H. te Velde, “Some Remarks on the Mysterious Language of the Baboons,” in *Funerary Symbols and Religion: Essays Dedicated to Professor M. S. H. G. Heerma van Voss on the Occasion of His Retirement from the Chair of the History of Ancient Religions at the University of Amsterdam* (ed. J. H. Kamstra et al.; Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1988) 133–34.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>78</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 99.

<sup>79</sup> Ritner (e-mail communication, October 27, 2008), with a reference to Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, 5:633–34.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. R. Anttila, *Historical and Comparative Linguistics* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series IV, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 6; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1989) 86: “The Proto-Germanic word for ‘cuckoo’ was \*gaukaz, which in due time gave MHG *gouch*, OE *gēac*, ON *gaukr*, and Swedish *gök* [y-]. In English and German the words have again become more iconic, that is, *cuckoo* and *Kuckuck*. This is obviously not regular sound change but “analogy” from the actual sound of the bird.”

from tinnitus.<sup>81</sup> The latter sound is conventionally called “ringing” in English, but it is often described as a buzzing or hissing sound. Thus, the king’s whispering may well be an attempt to imitate the hissing of a snake.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Hebrew *l-h-š* “whisper,” used frequently in the Bible of charming snakes, is attested in rabbinic literature with the meaning “hiss (of the serpent),” and Mandaic *lhša* has the meanings “whisper,” “hissing,” and “incantation.”<sup>83</sup> The phonetic value of the “bolt” sign (transliterated *z* here) during the Old Kingdom is controversial,<sup>84</sup> as is the original phonetic value of Hebrew *s* (fricative or affricate). There is some evidence that the two sounds were similar, if Biblical Hebrew *solām* “bald locust” (Lev 11:22) is a borrowing of Egyptian *znhm* “locust,” attested already in the Pyramid Texts (cf. Coptic *sanneh* “grasshopper”).<sup>85</sup> For Biblical Hebrew *l* rendering Egyptian *n* in the vicinity of *m*, we may compare Egyptian *hn̥m(.t)* “reddish jasper” > Biblical Hebrew *’ahlāmāh*, and Egyptian *nšm(.t)* “green feldspar” > Biblical Hebrew *lešem*.<sup>86</sup> It should be noted, however, that *z* and *s* merged in Egyptian at the end of the Old Kingdom; if *z* merged with *s* (rather than vice versa) and the merger predates the borrowing, the evidence that the borrowing provides for the realization of *z* is obviously less secure.

*k-w k-b-b-h = ḫawwū kabōbihu* “the uttering of his spell.” See the discussions of these words in PT 235 §239a and PT 236 §240 above.

<sup>81</sup> CAD, s.v. *azū*; W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–81) [=AHw] 92b, s.v. *azāzu*.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter 1, n. 24 above.

<sup>83</sup> Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 703a, s.v. *lḥišāh*; 704b, s.v. *l-h-š*; E. S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 236a, s.v. *lhša*.

<sup>84</sup> C. Peust, *Egyptian Phonology: An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language* (Monographien zur ägyptischen Sprache 2; Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt, 1999) 125–26.

<sup>85</sup> So Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 173; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999) 252, and some of the literature cited there. For a claim that these are Afroasiatic cognates, see O. Rössler, “Das Ägyptische als semitische Sprache,” in *Christentum am Roten Meer* (ed. F. Altheim and R. Stiehl; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971–) 1:288; and A. Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 34.

<sup>86</sup> Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names*, 238–39 and 248. It is true that these forms may simply exhibit a Late Egyptian dissimilation of *n* to *l* in the vicinity of *m* as in *mn̥* “wax” > Coptic *molh*; *nhm* “to shout” > Coptic *lhēm*; *hn̥m* “to smell” > Coptic *šōlm*; etc. (Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 166). If so, they would seem to have no relevance to Egyptian *znhm* “locust” > Coptic *sanneh* “grasshopper,” which does not exhibit dissimilation. However, sonorant dissimilations are typically sporadic, and thus it is possible that *znhm* originally had a second Late Egyptian reflex that did exhibit *n* > *l* but did not survive in Coptic.

*b-i = biya* “in me.”<sup>87</sup> The orthography of Byblian inscriptions (unlike that of our spells) distinguishes two allomorphs of the first common singular suffixed pronoun “me/my”: (1) *-iya* (written *-y*) used with genitive nouns and (2) *-ī* (written *-Ø*) used with nominative and accusative nouns. Thus, in the Yahaumilk inscription (*KAI* 10), we find *lrbty* “for my lady” (ll. 3, 7) and *wšm<sup>c</sup> kl wp<sup>c</sup>l ly n<sup>c</sup>m* “and she heard my voice and did kindness to me” (l. 8). The spelling *ly* points to *liya*.

*rw-n = r<sup>c</sup>ū-nā?* “see [masc. pl. imper.]”; cf. Biblical Hebrew *r<sup>c</sup>ū-nā?* (1 Sam 14:29; 16:17; 2 Sam 13:28). We would expect to find two glottal stops in this expression, one medial and one final, but neither is represented in the Egyptian; cf. *s = tūu* below. Several explanations may be considered. It is possible that Egyptian had no means yet of rendering noninitial Semitic glottal stops, since the only glottal stop in its inventory was an allophone of *i* (see chapter 4 below). In Middle Egyptian, that allophone occurred in two environments: (1) before an unstressed vowel in initial position and (2) in postvocalic position following the stress.<sup>88</sup> One could argue, however, that in Old Egyptian the allophone occurred only in environment 1. Alternatively, it is possible that the failure to use Egyptian *i* to render noninitial Semitic glottal stops (i.e., the failure to write *\*r-i-w* and *\*n-i*) reflects elision of the latter.<sup>89</sup> Elision of final glottal stops (including the glottal stop of *nā?*) is obligatory in Masoretic Hebrew. Elision of the glottal stop in *r<sup>c</sup>ū* (*r<sup>c</sup>ū?* *rw<sup>c</sup>ū?*) would be reminiscent of the elision in Arabic *raw* “see [masc. pl. imper.]”<sup>90</sup> < *\*r<sup>c</sup>aw* and in the Biblical Hebrew word for “Reubenite” (whose *aleph* is quiescent); cf. also Biblical Aramaic *rēw* “appearance” < *\*rīw*.<sup>91</sup> In that case the vocalization would probably be *rū-na*. The use of the *rw*-lion here is quite different from its use in the Aramaic text in Demotic script, where it is a mon consonantal sign representing *r* and *l*.

<sup>87</sup> Huehnergard (e-mail communication, March 29, 2008) suggests that the preposition may have some connection with “the ‘beth essentiae’ (perhaps, as well, reflecting the Egyptian ‘*m* of predication’ which is a necessary element in an equational sentence, at least in Middle Egyptian, as in *iw.k m sš* ‘you are a scribe’); thus, either ‘R-R are in me’ or ‘R-R are me’.”

<sup>88</sup> Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian*, 35.

<sup>89</sup> For later examples, see Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 419.

<sup>90</sup> See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3rd ed. rev. W. Robertson Smith and M. J. de Goeje; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 1:93.

<sup>91</sup> H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927) 184.

*p-h-ti-i = pāhōtī* “my mouths”; cf. Old Akkadian and Old Assyrian *pāšum* “mouth”<sup>92</sup> and Arabic *fūhun, fāhun, fihun*.<sup>93</sup> The āh in *pāhōtī* appears to be a stem augment. Augmentation with *ah/āh* was probably a productive morphological process in Proto-Semitic for forming the plural of short nouns, especially before -āt.<sup>94</sup> Some lexical items managed to preserve the association between the augment and plural number in several Semitic languages, for example, “mothers” (Arabic *‘ummahāt-*, Sabaic *‘mht*, Ugaritic *‘umht*, Targumic Aramaic *‘imməhāt-*, Syriac *‘emhātā*, Mishnaic Hebrew *‘immāhōt*); “maidservants” (Biblical Hebrew *‘māhōt*, Ugaritic *‘amht*, Targumic Aramaic *‘amhān*, Syriac *‘amhātā*, Sabaic *‘mh* “female clients/serfs”); “fathers” (Biblical Aramaic *‘bāhāt-*, Egyptian Aramaic *‘bhy-*, Sabaic *‘bh*, Arabic *‘abāhāt-*); “goddesses/gods” (Ugaritic *ilht*, Qatabanian *‘lhn*); “cities” (Ugaritic *krht*, Phoenician *krht-*); “doors” (Phoenician *dlht*, Egyptian Aramaic *dlht*); “trees” (Egyptian Aramaic *‘khn*, Arabic *‘idahāt-* “thorny shrubs”); “lips” (Mandaic *espihāta*, Arabic *ṣifāh-*).<sup>95</sup> Others preserved the association in only a single language, for example, Syriac *ḥmāhē* “fathers-in-law,” Biblical Aramaic *š‘māhāt* “names” (= Egyptian Aramaic *šmht-*), Arabic *sanahāt-* “years.”<sup>96</sup> In Arabic, the *h*-augment has spread to the broken plural, e.g., *miyāh-* “waters,” *‘amwāh-* “waters,” *‘astāh-* “anuses,” *ṣiyāh-* “sheep or goats,” *‘afwāh-* “mouths,” and *ṣifāh-* “lips.”<sup>97</sup> We also find backformations, in which the augment

<sup>92</sup> CAD gives *pīu* as well. For Old Akkadian *‘* used to represent the reflex of Proto-Semitic \**h* (e.g., *ti-a-am-tim* < \**tihāmatim*), see I. J. Gelb, *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar* (Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary 2; 2nd rev. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 119; and R. Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian: A Historical and Comparative Study of the Syllabic Texts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005) 78–79.

<sup>93</sup> See Lane, *Lexicon*, 2464 col. b (and 2446 col. b, s.v. *famun*).

<sup>94</sup> See Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1910) 109–78. (I am indebted to J. Blau for this reference.) Cf. also C. Brockelmann, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (2 vols.; Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1908, 1913) 1:455 §243; Z. S. Harris, *Development of the Canaanite Dialects: An Investigation in Linguistic History* (American Oriental Series 16; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1939) 53. Harris refers to these as “morphologic extensions in biradical roots.”

<sup>95</sup> Brockelmann, *Grundriß*, 1:455 §243; A. F. L. Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar* (Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph 6; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1984) 27; J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000) 296; Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, 151; S. D. Ricks, *Lexicon of Inscriptional Qatabanian* (Studia Pohl 14; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989) 10.

<sup>96</sup> T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 32; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 74.

<sup>97</sup> Wright, *Grammar*, 1:233. The last form is also cited above.

has spread to the singular, for example, Galilean Aramaic *'amhāh* “maidservant,” Ugaritic *mh* “water” (alongside *my*), and Hebrew *ׂlōh* = Biblical Aramaic *ׂlāh* = Arabic *'ilāh-* “god.”<sup>98</sup> The Akkadian and Arabic words for “mouth” cited above are presumably backformations as well.

*p-t-ti-i* = *putī/putōtī* “my pudendum/pudenda”; cf. PT 317 (cited above) and *pothēn y<sup>c</sup>āreh* (Isa 3:17), understood to mean “their pudenda He will bare” by Jonah Ibn Janāḥ, Judah Ibn Bal'am, David Kimhi, etc.<sup>99</sup> They compare *pōtōt* (1 Kgs 7:50) and *pōtāh* (*m.Kelim* 11:2), feminine nouns that refer to a cup-shaped metal socket in the ground into which a door hinge is inserted. The assumption that one meaning is a figurative extension of the other is very plausible; a similar metaphoric use of *female* and *male* is very common in English today.<sup>100</sup> Note also the metaphoric use of *yādōt* in the sense of “tenons” (Exod 26 and 36, *passim*). Most modern scholars prefer to compare *pothēn* to Akkadian *pūtu* “forehead” or (following R. Saadia Gaon)<sup>101</sup> to Hebrew *pē'āh* “side of head, temple.” Such comparisons assume that the *t* of *pothēn* is the feminine ending and that the form *pōtōt* did not exist in ancient Hebrew as the pluralized name of a body part. However, it is possible that our form is to be read *putōtī* (pl.) rather than *putī* (sing.). For the rendering with Egyptian *t*, see chapter 4 below.

*p-h-ti-i p-t-ti-i* = *pāhōtī putī/putōtī* “my mouths, my pudendum/pudenda.” These two words are repeated from the beginning of the spell. They were origi-

<sup>98</sup> For the first example, see S. E. Fassberg, *A Grammar of the Palestinian Targum Fragments from the Cairo Genizah* (Harvard Semitic Studies 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 138; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 62. For the last, see Harris, *Development*, 53; and cf. the Ugaritic divine name *Ilh*.

<sup>99</sup> *Kitāb al-<sup>r</sup>uṣūl: The Book of Hebrew Roots by Abu'l-Walid Marwān Ibn Janāḥ* (ed. A. Neubauer; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875) 567 l. 17–568 l. 5; פירוש ר' יהודה אבן בלעם לספר ישעיהו (ed. M. Goshen-Gottstein; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1992) 39. Their interpretation of *pothēn* is implicit in the Talmud (*b.Shabbat* 62b) and is the basis of Modern Hebrew *dalleket ha-pot* “vulvitis,” etc.

<sup>100</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “female,” cites the phrase “the female section of an electrical outlet.” Ibn Janāḥ and Ibn Bal'am, on the other hand, assume that “pudendum, vagina” is the secondary, metaphoric meaning. This is a natural assumption for speakers of Arabic, with its plethora of sexual euphemisms.

<sup>101</sup> See חפֵיר ישׁעַיָּה לְרִב סֻדִּיה (ed. Y. Ratzaby; Kiriat Ono, Israel: Mkhon Moshe, 1993) p. ٧; and cf. Ibn Ezra ad loc. In the same vein, Saadia includes *pōtōt* (and Mishnaic Hebrew *pōtāh*) in his treatise on *hapax legomena* in the Bible, which would not be possible if *pothēn* had the same meaning; see N. Allony, מחרקי לשון וספרות (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1986-) 1:63–64. It has not been noted that Saadia's interpretation presupposes the vocalization *pāthēn*, a vocalization that is, in fact, attributed to the Babylonian (“eastern”) reading tradition in one Masoretic note; see I. Yeivin, מסורת הלשון העברית המשתקפת בניקוד הבבלי (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1985) 777.

nally followed by the king's name, *Wnis* "Unas," but the latter was subsequently erased.<sup>102</sup> If there is more here than just a simple error, we may conjecture that the king's name replaces an original first-person common singular pronoun *ink* "I"; it is generally believed that many of the Egyptian Pyramid Texts were originally in the first person but were personalized for each tomb through the substitution of the king's name.<sup>103</sup> Here, however, the substitution of the king's name would have been due to a misunderstanding, since, in our Semitic spell, *ink* would have represented not the Egyptian pronoun but rather a transcription of the cognate Semitic pronoun *'anōk-* "I" used emphatically: "*my* mouths, *my* pudendum/pudenda" (cf. Num 14:32 *uṣpigrēkem ḫattem* "and your corpses"; 2 Sam 19:1 *mūṭī ḫānī* "my dying"). If this conjecture is correct, the point of the repetition of these two words would be to stress that the mouths and pudendum/pudenda really do belong to the speaker and that the magical transformation is not an illusion.

*m-mi-n = miya-ni* "who." Bisyllabic *miya* "who" is known from the Amarna letters (where it is used alongside *mannu* "who," the standard Akkadian personal interrogative pronoun)<sup>104</sup> and Ugaritic. Enclitic *n* is common in Ugaritic, occurring even with pronouns, for example, *ankn* "I myself."<sup>105</sup> In the Amarna letters, *miya* usually appears with a suffixed *-mi* or *-ti*, for example, *mi-ia-mi a-na-ku* "who am I?" and *mi-ia-ti a-na-ku* "idem."<sup>106</sup> Another word used for "who" in letters from Byblos—and only there—is Akkadian *mīnu* "what."<sup>107</sup> This nonstandard use of Akkadian *mīnu* suggests that *miya-ni* "who" was still in use in Byblos a thousand years after the reign of Unas. Even if this form is not exclusively Byblian, it points toward Canaanite and Ugaritic and away from Aramaic and the

<sup>102</sup> Mathieu, "Modifications," 306.

<sup>103</sup> H. Altenmüller, "Pyramidentexte," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (ed. W. Helck and E. Otto; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–92) 5:17; S. Schott, *Mythe und Mythenbildung im alten Ägypten* (Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens 15; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1945) 46; J. P. Allen, "Pyramid Texts," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (ed. D. B. Redford; 3 vols.; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 3:97; but see also Mathieu, "Modifications," 290–91. In PT 569 §1440c ("I am *Skṣn*, envoy of Rē"), an original *ink* "I" survives, having slipped by the ancient editor; see Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 222 and 223 n. 1.

<sup>104</sup> A. F. Rainey, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets: A Linguistic Analysis of the Mixed Dialect Used by the Scribes from Canaan* (4 vols.; Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 25; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1:103.

<sup>105</sup> Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary*, 610, s.v. *-n*.

<sup>106</sup> Rainey, *Canaanite*, 1:106–8. According to Izre'el ("Canaanite Varieties," 90), *mi-ia-ti* should be normalized as *miyāti*, representing a different form of the pronoun itself.

<sup>107</sup> Rainey, *Canaanite*, 1:105.

other Semitic languages, which have *\*man-*.<sup>108</sup> The writing of our word, *m-mi-n* instead of *m-i-n*, is also of interest because the first two signs (“owl” and “forearm with bread”) spell out the Egyptian cognate *mi* “who, what.”<sup>109</sup> This suggests that the scribe who originally reduced the serpent spells to writing had at least a rudimentary understanding of Canaanite.<sup>110</sup> All of this fits well with other evidence pointing to a Byblian origin for our spells.

*i(w)nw*<sup>111</sup> = *’anō* “I” or *’anū* “we.” For the latter alternative, cf. Mishnaic Hebrew *’ānū*, attested once in the Bible (Jer 42:6, according to the Babylonian reading tradition).<sup>112</sup> However, it is usually assumed that this is a late innovation. For the former alternative, cf. Eblaite *a-na*, *an-na*, Amorite *a-na*, Ugaritic *an*, Old Aramaic *’nh* (Biblical Aramaic *’aṇāḥ*, Syriac *’enāḥ*), Arabic *’anā*, Geez *’ana* and Biblical Hebrew *’aṇī*.<sup>113</sup> For the *ō*, cf. Biblical Hebrew *’ānōkī*. Like the long form of the pronoun (*’anāku*), the short form (*’anā/Pana*) goes back to Proto-Semitic or even Proto-Afroasiatic.<sup>114</sup> It is possible that both forms occur here side by side,<sup>115</sup> as they do in more than a dozen biblical verses.<sup>116</sup> This alternative suggests that the preference of Phoenician and Moabite for the long form *’nk*<sup>117</sup> is a later development. Moreover, it raises the possibility that the “Canaanite shift” (*\*ā > ḥ*) occurred at Byblos already in the third millennium B.C.E.; see the commentary on *hnw = hinnō* “they” below. The pillar sign used here shows that the scribe heard the Semitic word as being similar to the Egyptian word for “pillar; Heliopolis.” This perceived similarity supports the view of some Egyptologists that the Egyp-

<sup>108</sup> J. Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (ed. R. D. Woodard; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 151.

<sup>109</sup> Edel, *Grammatik*, 90 §203.

<sup>110</sup> See at chapter 5, n. 15 below.

<sup>111</sup> In the Pyramid Texts of Teti, the pillar sign is replaced by *i-n* plus the sun-disk determinative. The significance of this change (including the use of the determinative) is unclear.

<sup>112</sup> See R. C. Steiner, “A Colloquialism in Jer. 5:13 from the Ancestor of Mishnaic Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 37 (1992) 18–20.

<sup>113</sup> This form appears to be the product of analogy with *’ānōkī* and/or the suffix *-anī*.

<sup>114</sup> Harris, *Development*, 74; Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” 140, 150. The view that the short form is a “specifically West Semitic innovation” (Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 80) became untenable with the publication of the Eblaite evidence.

<sup>115</sup> See at n. 103 above.

<sup>116</sup> Exod 7:17; 1 Sam 4:16; 2 Sam 3:13; 20:17; Isa 43:12; 45:12; Jer 24:7; 25:29; Hos 5:14; Jonah 1:9; Job 13:2; 33:9; Ruth 4:4; Neh 1:6.

<sup>117</sup> Harris, *Development*, 74; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 79–80. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say what form was used in Old Byblian, since “evidence for this pronoun in Byblian appears only in later texts” (Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 79).

tian word should be transliterated *inw* rather than *iwnw*.<sup>118</sup> It is noteworthy that the first-person pronoun is used here rather than the name of the king.<sup>119</sup>

*t-w-b* = *tu/iwbu* “perfume”; cf. Arabic *tibun* “perfume,” Qatabanian *tyb* “incense,” and Biblical Hebrew *tōb*, which can mean “sweet-smelling” (Jer 6:20) and, according to many scholars, “perfume” (Song 7:10; etc.).<sup>120</sup> Like *b-š*, the common Semitic root *t-w/y-b* “good” may have originally had a special connection to odors. In the inscriptions of Thutmose III, the toponym *Tōb* is written with initial *t*.<sup>121</sup> For the rendering with Egyptian *t*, see chapter 4 below.

*s* = *ṭū'u* “fragrance”; cf. Ugaritic *zu* “scent,” Jibbali *qē* “smell, odor,” Mehri *dāy* “smell, scent,” Harsusi *day* “smell, perfume,” *ṣedyo* “perfume oneself.”<sup>122</sup> The Ugaritic dictionaries distort the meaning slightly, translating “Ausdünstung” (but “Duft” in translating the citation!)<sup>123</sup> and “exhalation, secretion > excrement,”<sup>124</sup> based on the assumption that *zu* is the reflex of an abstract noun derived from Proto-Semitic \**w-š-* “go out” or that it is related to Akkadian *zū* “excrement”; however, the Modern South Arabian evidence makes these assumptions unlikely.<sup>125</sup> From the context, it appears that Ugaritic *zu* is a synonym of *rh* “scent,” since both nouns are used of the essence of *anhb* “sea snail” with which the goddess ‘Anat perfumes herself before and after battle (*KTU* 1.3 II 2-3 and 1.3 III 1-2). Discussion of other possible cognates (for example, Ethiopic *ṣi?* “bad smell” and Arabic

<sup>118</sup> Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 144 n. 173, citing the transcription *A-na* in a Babylonian letter of Ramses II, “King of Ana (Heliopolis),” found at Boghazköi. Cf. J. Osing, *Die Nominalbildung des Ägyptischen* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1976) 642; G. F. del Monte and J. Tischler, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der hethitischen Texte* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1978) 15.

<sup>119</sup> See at n. 103 above.

<sup>120</sup> Ricks, *Lexicon*, 77–78; J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 17, 142–44.

<sup>121</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 356 (no. 525).

<sup>122</sup> T. M. Johnstone, *Jibbāli Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 50; idem, *Mehri Lexicon* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1987) 85; idem, *Harsūsi Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977) 30. The final *š* in some of these forms is the reflex of \**š* (cf. Mehri *nēš* “raw, uncooked,” etc.), not \**c*.

<sup>123</sup> J. Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache* (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse 106.3; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963) 271.

<sup>124</sup> Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary*, 1003, s.v. *zu*.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. A. Militarev and L. Kogan, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 278; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000–) 1:256; L. Kogan, “Popular Etymology in the Semitic Languages,” in *Studia Semitica* (ed. L. Kogan; Orientalia 3; Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2003) 134–35.

*zayy-* “honey,” *zayyān-* “wild jasmine”<sup>126</sup>) would take us too far afield. The use of Egyptian *s* to render Semitic \**t* here is noteworthy in view of the use of Egyptian *š* to render Semitic \**t* in *š-w = t(aw)ō* (PT 286 §427a below). This suggests that \**t* and \**t̄* no longer had the same place of articulation in our dialect. Indeed, we cannot exclude the possibility that \**t* had already merged with \**s* and/or that \**t̄* had already merged with \**s̄*. This asymmetry is a feature of the later Canaanite dialects but not of Aramaic.<sup>127</sup> For the failure to represent the glottal stop, see the discussion of *rw-n = ri<sup>2</sup>ū-na<sup>2</sup>* above. Here there is one additional possibility. If the case endings had already dropped in the construct state, the glottal stop in this word was in final position, and (given that the following word begins with a glottal stop) this could be another instance of “shared consonants.”

*i(w)f = 'appi* “nose.” The flesh determinative used here shows that the scribe heard the Semitic word as being similar to the Egyptian word for “flesh, meat” (Coptic *af*). This perceived similarity seems to support the view of some Egyptologists that the Egyptian word should be transliterated *if* rather than *iwf*.<sup>128</sup> It may also support the claims of some scholars that Egyptian *f* was not originally a fricative.<sup>129</sup> However, it is also possible that the later use of Latin *f* to render the Punic reflex of Proto-Semitic \**p* in all positions<sup>130</sup> reflects a realization (fricative or affricate) that is much older in Phoenician than generally assumed. In any event, the use of Egyptian *f* to render the reflex of Proto-Semitic \**p* is known from the Middle Kingdom (execration texts) and the New Kingdom.<sup>131</sup>

*t-w-b s i(w)f = tu/iwbu tū'u 'appi* “fragrant perfume of the nose”; cf. Song 7:9 *rē<sup>a</sup>ḥ 'appēk kattappūḥīm* “the fragrance of your nose like that of apples.” *Rīr-Rīr* is the fragrant perfume of the king’s nose, because *Rīr-Rīr*’s spirit is in the king’s nostrils; cf. Job 27:3 *rū<sup>a</sup>ḥ xēlō<sup>a</sup>ḥ b<sup>e</sup>appī* “God’s breath/spirit is in my nostrils (= I am alive).”

*hnw = hinnō* “they.” The pot determinative used here shows that the scribe heard the Semitic pronoun as being similar to the Egyptian word for “vessel,

<sup>126</sup> Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary*, 567; J. G. Hava, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951) 448.

<sup>127</sup> It goes without saying that one should not be misled by the orthographic representation of the interdentals in Old Aramaic inscriptions (apart from the one from Tell Fekheriye), which seems to exhibit the same asymmetry. It is commonly accepted that this asymmetrical representation was borrowed, together with the alphabet itself, from Phoenician.

<sup>128</sup> See Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 144, and the references cited there.

<sup>129</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 430 (affricate); Rössler, “Das Ägyptische,” 280 (emphatic plosive).

<sup>130</sup> Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, 22.

<sup>131</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 401, 430.

liquid measure.”<sup>132</sup> The same pronoun (spelled *h-nw-w* without the determinative) appears as a suffix in PT 286 §427a below, where it also refers to *Rīr-Rīr*. Its number is somewhat uncertain. The context calls for the dual. In Arabic, however, the third-person dual pronoun for both genders is formed by adding *ā* to *hum* “they (masc.)”; *hunna* “they (fem.)” does not take the dual ending.<sup>133</sup> The prevailing assumption is that the same was true for Ugaritic and even for Proto-Semitic.<sup>134</sup> Thus, we cannot exclude the possibility that our pronoun is feminine plural like Biblical Hebrew *hennāh* and Arabic *hunna*, which are usually thought to be derived from a form whose final vowel was of variable length (*anceps*)—*\*hinnā/\*hinna* or the like. Either way, it is further evidence for the duality of *Rīr-Rīr*. And either way, we are dealing with *ō* from an original *\*ā*. Fortunately, the scribes have not left any room for doubt in PT 286 §427a about the rounding of the final vowel.<sup>135</sup> In the Pyramid Texts of Unas and his second or third successor Pepy I, the rounding is represented twice, with the *w* of the *nw*-sign reinforced by *w* (quail chick) serving as a phonetic complement. Does this form, taken together with *inw = 'anō* “I” (see above), provide evidence for the so-called “Canaanite shift” (*\*ā > ō*) already in the third millennium B.C.E.?<sup>136</sup> Did the shift

<sup>132</sup> It is the same word that later, after the loss of the final vowel, was borrowed into Hebrew as *hīn*. In the Aramaic text in Demotic script, Demotic *hn* is used often to write last syllable of the word *'elāhīn* “gods.”

<sup>133</sup> Wright, *Grammar*, 1:101.

<sup>134</sup> D. Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 28; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 52; Tropper, *Grammatik*, 227; Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” 150.

<sup>135</sup> The word for “vessel, liquid measure” is transcribed *\*hīn-w* by Osing (*Nominalbildung*, 463 n. 123). The apocopation of the final vowel, reflected in Hebrew *hīn* (not to mention Coptic and Greek), occurred later. An intermediate stage, with unrounding of the final vowel, may be reflected in the Amarna letters, a thousand years after our texts. Some scholars, mainly Egyptologists, believe that the word appears as *hi-na* in Amarna letter 14 (III 62); see T. O. Lambdin, “Egyptian Words in Tell El Amarna Letter No. 14,” *Orientalia N.S.* 22 (1953) 365; Osing, *Nominalbildung*, 463 n. 123, 819–20 n. 1082; E. Edel, “Weitere Beiträge zum Verständnis der Geschenklisten des Amarnabriefes Nr. 14,” in *Documentum Asiae Minoris antiquae: Festschrift für Heinrich Otten zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. E. Neu and C. Rüster; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988) 105–6; Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian*, 38; Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names*, 243, 299. Other scholars, mainly Assyriologists, are not convinced; see W. von Soden, *AHw*, 1:347; W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 33; Z. Cochavi-Rainey, *מלך אדוני* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2005), 36.

<sup>136</sup> This question is answered in the negative by J. Blau, *בקדם-כנענית בכתב היפירמייזות*, *Lešonenu* 71 (2009) 425–27; however, Blau’s answer appears to be based, in part, on an inaccurately cited form. In support of Blau’s position, one might cite the

originate in northern Phoenicia and then spread southward?<sup>137</sup> The conditioning of the “Canaanite shift” remains controversial.<sup>138</sup> This new evidence, if it is relevant, complicates matters even further. It comes from word-final position, since that is where *matres lectionis* are normally found in our Semitic spells. It is often assumed that this shift affected only stressed vowels and that final vowels were not originally stressed in forms with more than syllable. The forms *'anō* and *hinnō* can be reconciled with either one of these assumptions individually, but not with both.<sup>139</sup>

*inw hn̄w = 'anō hinnō* “I am they” or *'anū hinnō* “we are they.” For the latter alternative, cf. Biblical Aramaic *‘naḥnā himmō* “we are [lit., we are they]” (Ezra 5:11). The former alternative is not as odd as it sounds; the king (singular) is identifying himself with the double mother snake (dual or plural). Royal utterances of the form “I am DN,” the so-called “divine identifications,” are not uncommon in the Pyramid Texts. Among the more relevant ones, we may mention: “I am Sobk” (PT 317);<sup>140</sup> “I am *Zty-zty*” with a reduplicated name (PT 506);<sup>141</sup> “I am *H'y-tzw* who dwells in Lebanon” (PT 322);<sup>142</sup> and “Where is Horus . . . ? Behold me, I am Horus. . . .” (PT 388).<sup>143</sup> Another interesting parallel is found in PT 390, where a snake asks, “Are you Horus?” and “Are you Seth?” The king replies: “This foot of mine [which I put on you] is the foot of Mafdet; this hand of mine which I lay

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absence of final *w* in the vocative particle, *i* = *yā-* “O” (see PT 235 §239b above), which would seem to contradict the evidence of *'anō* and *hinnō*. However, it is possible that the use of *i* as a vocative particle in Egyptian (see at n. 42 above) influenced the orthography here. It is also possible that the vowel of proclitic *yā* transferred its length to the initial consonant of the next word (a form of quantitative metathesis), as happened with proclitic *mā* and probably *hā* in Biblical Hebrew; see Bauer and Leander, *Historische Grammatik*, 218 §24a–b, 379 §55t.

<sup>137</sup> The fact that the shift is most advanced in Phoenicia (affecting *ā* resulting from the syncope of semivowels and/or secondary lengthening) may indicate that it originated there; see Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 30–33, 233.

<sup>138</sup> See now L. Kogan, “Reconstructing Proto-Semitic: Phonetics and Phonology,” in *Handbook of Semitic Languages and Linguistics* (M. Streck and S. Weninger; forthcoming) §2.1.2, and the literature cited there.

<sup>139</sup> It is possible that the augmented Biblical Hebrew prepositions, *b<sup>e</sup>mō* and *l<sup>e</sup>mō*, in phrases like *b<sup>e</sup>mō-ḥī* “in my mouth” and *l<sup>e</sup>mō-ḥī* “to my mouth” (Job 16:5, 19:16; 40:4), can tip the balance. Here we have the Canaanite shift affecting prepositions, which in all likelihood were unstressed.

<sup>140</sup> See above.

<sup>141</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 181.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>143</sup> The question-and-answer format for introducing a deity is attested also in the Aramaic text in Demotic script (XIII/17; cf. XIV/1 and XIV/3): “Who are you (*mnʒnʒnty<sup>m</sup>*)? You are my powerful goddess.” As in our text, the questioner answers his own question.

on you is the hand of Mafdet. . . . O *n̄w*-snake, crawl away!”<sup>144</sup> In these cases, the king acts much like the later magician, who “expresses the will of supernatural powers by impersonating them, hence . . . the frequent initial presentative clause ‘I am god X.’”<sup>145</sup>

*ȝ-ȝ-ȝ . . . w-inw hnw = Rīr-Rīr . . . wa'anō/ū hinnō “Rīr-Rīr . . . —I/we am/are they.”* For the syntax, cf. *w<sup>e</sup>et<sup>a</sup>ah<sup>a</sup>rōnīm<sup>a</sup>nī hū* “and with the last—I am he” (Isa 41:4) and *‘ebēd<sup>a</sup>ābīkā wa<sup>a</sup>nī mē<sup>a</sup>āz* “your father’s servant—I was formerly” (2 Sam 15:34).

### PT 282

§423a *i hȝzt tn rȝ ȝ.i ikt.k pi*

O (snake of) this foreign land, (like) the mouth of a vulture against me! This (= the following) is (the true nature of) your attack.<sup>146</sup>

§423b *hȝzt tn rȝ ȝ.i nbw hknw*

O (snake of) this foreign land, (like) the mouth of a vulture against me, (you who are) subject to The Gold of Jubilation,

§423c *Hȝy-tȝw hknw kȝ.k nn wȝs irrw<sup>147</sup> nn r.f*

The One that Appears in Flame (*Hȝy-tȝw*) and Jubilation! That is your bull, the esteemed one against whom this (= your attack) is done.

The king turns to a foreign snake that wishes to eat his dead body, like a vulture. He asserts that the true target of the snake’s attack is *Hȝy-tȝw*, god of Byblos. The term *hȝzt* here, like *hȝst* in PT 232 §236c above, has the nuance of “foreign land”;<sup>148</sup> it is a metaphoric allusion to a foreign snake,<sup>149</sup> that is, one of the Byblite

<sup>144</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 128–29; cf. Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 90 no. 265.

<sup>145</sup> Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, x.

<sup>146</sup> The translation of this line and the two following ones is from Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 53 no. 188, with modifications based (for the most part) on an analysis supplied by Ritner.

<sup>147</sup> Leitz reads *irw* (“Schlangensprüche,” 415) here, but this appears to be a typographical error, since “in both spells, there are two visible *r*’s in *irrw*” (Ritner, e-mail communication, November 4, 2008)

<sup>148</sup> So Ritner, who adds (e-mail communication, April 24, 2009): “This is how Maspero took it long ago (ref. in Gauthier, *Dictionnaire Géographique*, vol. III, 1926, p. 112).” Cf. Leitz, “Schlangensprüche,” 415: “O diese Wüste.”

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 53 no. 188: “O *hȝzt*-snake, the vulture’s mouth.” In theory, *hȝzt* could be interpreted as a *nisbe*—*hȝzt(y)*—with the meaning “foreigner” (see n. 155 below); however, as Ritner points out (e-mail communication,

snakes in PT 286 §427b below. PT 282 §423b-c and PT 238 §242c are so similar that they must have a common ancestor. It is remarkable that a spell invoking a deity as obscure as *H̄y-t̄w* should be among the few passages common to both series of serpent spells. It would appear that the priests of *H̄y-t̄w* in Byblos appended this spell to the Semitic spells that they provided to a visiting Egyptian delegation.<sup>150</sup> The association of snake charming with temples and priests at Ugarit and in Mesopotamia has already been noted.<sup>151</sup>

### PT 286

- §427a ‘b š w m 3 3 3 š w t m t i t h nw w  
‘ubušū mi(n>r)-Rīr-Rīr, t(aw)ō ta/imītu yaduhinnō/iduhinnō  
Hurry [pl.!] away from Rīr-Rīr, (the ones) whose hand deals death.
- §427b kbnw zbnw hz(t) nt nwt  
The Byblites have crawled off.<sup>152</sup> O praised one [fem.!] of the Red Crowns,
- §427c 333 šy 333 šy ntzi(t) nt nwt  
Rīr-Rīr of the sea, Rīr-Rīr of the sea,<sup>153</sup> exalted one [fem.] of the Red Crowns,
- §427d iʒ.t rn.i  
may you [fem.] praise my name!

### PT 287

- §428a nn(i) mwt.f nn(i) mwt.f  
O fugitive of his mother! O fugitive of his mother!
- §428b iw.k rr m nn(i) iw.k rr m nn(i) mʒ t̄fi

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April 24, 2009), it is not clear that this masculine *nisbe* can be modified by a feminine demonstrative adjective agreeing with the stem of the *nisbe* (*hʒzt*).

<sup>150</sup> See at chapter 5, n. 13 below.

<sup>151</sup> See at chapter 1 nn. 21 and 23 above.

<sup>152</sup> The translation of this sentence is from Allen (*Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 53 no. 192), who interprets *kbnw* “Byblites” as “a metaphor for snakes gliding like the sea-going vessels known as ‘Byblites’” (*ibid.*, 63 n. 74); however, see at n. 157 below. The interpretation of the rest of the spell is from Ritner (e-mail communications, October 28 and 29, 2008).

<sup>153</sup> For the rendering “sea,” see Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, 4:397–98, s.v. š. Ritner notes that the genitive could indicate that *Rīr-Rīr* came to Egypt by sea. Are we to imagine that this Semitic mother snake arrived, like her offspring (see at chapter 1 n. 69 above), as a stowaway on a ship from Byblos? Or is she a sea-serpent?

You are really a fugitive. You are really a fugitive. O lion, be off.<sup>154</sup>

*Rīr-Rīr*'s command (in the plural), uttered in Canaanite, is accompanied by an implicit threat, and it has an immediate effect on creatures called "Byblites" (also in the plural).<sup>155</sup> These creatures must be snakes, because the verb *zbn* "crawl off, slither away" is used repeatedly of snakes in the serpent spells; it is "apparently used only in reference to snakes in particular."<sup>156</sup> In other words, the "Byblites" would seem to be snakes introduced into Egypt from Byblos (Palestinian vipers?), snakes capable of understanding a Canaanite command.<sup>157</sup> Those are the only snakes who would be likely to be moved by a reference to the obscure Byblian deity *H̄y-t̄w*. Upon their retreat, the grateful king turns to *Rīr-Rīr*. He invokes her as the praised one of the Red Crowns and asks her to praise him.<sup>158</sup> In protecting the king, she has turned her offspring into fugitives.

‘-b-š-w = ‘*ubuṣū* “hurry.” Reflexes of the root \*c-*b*-š are found in Aramaic (‘*bk* > ‘*b*c > ‘*b*c) and, according to some, in Ugaritic (‘*bṣ*).<sup>159</sup> Another example of

<sup>154</sup> The interpretation of this spell comes from Ritner (e-mail communication, November 4, 2008): "The writing of *nn* is identical in all 4 instances in §§428a-b, so the likelihood that they are all the same word is great. As there is a clear snake name *nn(i)*, probably derived from 'wander/depart,' it is highly reasonable to link all four writings with that." The fugitive snake is reminiscent of Biblical Hebrew *nāḥāš bārīt̄h* (an archaic passive participle from the root *b-r-h* "flee"; cf. *pālīt̄* "fugitive") and Ugaritic *bṭn br̄h* (Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary*, 236–37, s.v. *br̄h*).

<sup>155</sup> The term *kbnw* appears to be a *nisbe*, a gentilic formed from *Kbn* "Byblos" < Canaanite *Gbl*. In Old Egyptian, the *nisbe*-formative, the suffix -y, was often omitted (Edel, *Grammatik*, 147 §344).

<sup>156</sup> Ogdon, "Studies," 63.

<sup>157</sup> The use of the term "Byblites" to refer to foreign snakes is paralleled in a later magical text, where foreign demons are addressed as "Asiatic" and "Nubian"; see chapter 5, n. 21 below.

<sup>158</sup> So Ritner (e-mail communications, October 28 and 29, 2008). For the Red Crowns, see K. Goebs, *Crowns in Egyptian Funerary Literature: Royalty, Rebirth, and Destruction* (Griffith Institute Monographs; Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2008). I am indebted to Baines for this reference.

<sup>159</sup> See P. Grelot, "On the Root עַבְקָע / עַבְקָע in Ancient Aramaic and in Ugaritic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956) 202–5; idem, "Complementary Note on the Semitic Root /עַבְקָע / עַבְקָע," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2 (1957) 195; and the rest of the literature cited by J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 21; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 821, s.v. ‘*bk*; by Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary*, 145, s.v. ‘*bṣ*; and by J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary*

Old Egyptian ‘ rendering Semitic \**c* and Old Egyptian š rendering Semitic \*š (the ancestor of Arabic *dād*) is discussed on p. 12 above: Egyptian ‘š < Semitic \*š. The parallel passage in PT 728 §2256 (Pepy II) reads ‘-b-d-w.<sup>160</sup> The substitution of *d* for š, if not simply a copyist’s error,<sup>161</sup> may reflect a new attempt, in the time Pepy II, to render the difficult foreign sound.<sup>162</sup> The glottallic (ejective) lateral \*š probably had two allophones: [ʃ?] (fricative) and [tʃ?] (affricate).<sup>163</sup> It is possible that Egyptian š renders the former allophone,<sup>164</sup> while Egyptian *d* renders the latter.<sup>165</sup> Since Egyptian *d* is not used elsewhere in these spells to render Semitic (see chapter 4 below), this rendering might reflect some later development from the time of Pepy II.

*m-3-3-3 = mi(n>r)-Rīr-Rīr* “away from Rīr-Rīr.” The *n* of *min* “from” is not represented, presumably because it was assimilated, as in Hebrew, Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite.<sup>166</sup> Evidence for Old Byblian *min* is lacking, because its function was usurped by other prepositions, for example, *wnht tbrḥ l gbl* “and tranquility will flee from Byblos” (*KAI* 1, Ahīrōm, l. 2) and [v]b’ . . . *bmṣrm* “brou[ght] . . . from Egypt” (*KAI* 5, Abība<sup>cl</sup>, ll. 1–2). For the same reason, the evidence for standard Phoenician *min* is very sparse. Nevertheless, there is indirect evidence for the behavior of *min* at an earlier stage. In standard Phoenician, *min* continued to be used, with assimilated *n*, in combination with other prepositions, viz., *lm-* and *lmb-*.<sup>167</sup> In Old Byblian, even the *n* of *bin* “son of” assimilated to the

(3rd ed.; *Biblica et Orientalia* 18/B; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004) 199–200 n. 234.

<sup>160</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, Supplement, 77.

<sup>161</sup> Sethe’s list of *Zeichenverwechslungen* (*Pyramidentexte*, 4:125–27) contains no examples of *d* for š or vice versa.

<sup>162</sup> For another possible revision, in the time of Pepy I, see at n. 185 below.

<sup>163</sup> See R. C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (American Oriental Series 59; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1977) 156; and idem, *Affricated Šade in the Semitic Languages* (American Academy for Jewish Research Monograph Series 3; New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1982) 86.

<sup>164</sup> The use of Egyptian [š] to render [ʃ] is quite natural. Indeed, \*š, which was also originally a voiceless lateral fricative, merged with \*š in the area of Byblos in later times; see R. C. Steiner, “Semitic Names for Utensils in the Demotic Word-List from Tebtunis” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 59 (2000) 191; idem, “On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes (\*H > H and \*G > G) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005) 237 n. 43.

<sup>165</sup> It is also possible that Egyptian *d* renders the plosive component of the affricate, while Egyptian š renders the fricative component.

<sup>166</sup> Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 44.

<sup>167</sup> Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, 181. Cf. also Hoftijzer and Jongeling, *Dictionary*, 649, s.v. *mn<sub>s</sub>*.

initial consonant of a following word;<sup>168</sup> thus, it is very likely that the *n* of *min* did so as well. By contrast, the *n* of *min* did not assimilate in Proto-Aramaic (as reconstructed from Old Aramaic, Samalian, and the dialect of Deir Alla).<sup>169</sup> This is one of the Canaanite innovations that show that our dialect is not a direct ancestor of Aramaic.

*š-w = t(aw)ō* “(the ones) whose.” The determinative-relative pronoun<sup>170</sup> used here looks, at first glance, like the masculine singular nominative form (Old Akkadian *šu*, Ugaritic *d* = *du-ū*, Arabic *dū*, Epigraphic South Arabian *d-*);<sup>171</sup> however, that would not agree with the nonsingular resumptive pronoun (*h-nw-w* = *hinnō*) inside the relative clause. Moreover, since our pronoun stands in opposition to a noun governed by a preposition, it ought to be in the genitive case. Nor can our pronoun be feminine singular or feminine plural; these forms have a *t* in Old Akkadian (*šat-*, *šāt-*), Ugaritic (*dt*, *dt*), Arabic (*dāt-*, *dawāt-*), and (in the singular, at least) Epigraphic South Arabian (*dt*, ...).<sup>172</sup> The context requires a feminine dual genitive pronoun here. The evidence for the dual forms of the determinative-relative pronoun is fragmentary and contradictory. In Old Akkadian, the dual determinative-relative pronoun usually appears in the masculine nominative as *šā* (alongside one occurrence of *šī*).<sup>173</sup> In Eblaite, it appears in the oblique (genitive-accusative) case as *ša-a*, perhaps reflecting *tay*;<sup>174</sup> the nominative would presumably be \**tā*. In Arabic, the feminine oblique form of the dual is

<sup>168</sup> Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 40.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 44. Transcriptions in cuneiform and Demotic show that the spelling *mn* in Aramaic is not merely morphophonemic. It is true that (as E. Bar-Asher reminds me) there seem to be two examples of the assimilated allomorph *m-* “from” in the Sefire inscriptions (IA 25 *mzy* “from the time that?, as long as?”; III 22 *mk* “than you”); see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Biblica et Orientalia 19; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 186–87, s.v. *mzy* and *mn*. However, it is dangerous to extrapolate from the behavior of *mn* before grammatical morphemes. There is no evidence that Old Aramaic *m-* was used with proper nouns (such as *Rīr-Rīr*) and no evidence that this allomorph goes back to Proto-Aramaic.

<sup>170</sup> For the use of this pronoun in Proto-Semitic, see Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” 151.

<sup>171</sup> Gelb, *Old Akkadian*, 133–34; Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian*, 161–62; Sivan, *Grammar*, 54–55; Tropper, *Grammatik*, 235; Wright, *Grammar*, 1:272; Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar*, 41, 63, 66, 69. Cf. Biblical Hebrew *zū*.

<sup>172</sup> Gelb, *Old Akkadian*, 133–34; Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian*, 161, 163–64; Sivan, *Grammar*, 54, 56–57; Tropper, *Grammatik*, 235; Wright, *Grammar*, 1:272–73; Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar*, 41, 63, 66, 69.

<sup>173</sup> Gelb, *Old Akkadian*, 133–34; Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian*, 161, 163.

<sup>174</sup> P. Fronzaroli, “Forms of the Dual in the Texts of Ebla,” *Maarav* 5–6 (1990) 121, 125. Fronzaroli normalizes the form as /day/.

*dawātay*, while the masculine nominative form of the dual is *dawā*.<sup>175</sup> In Sabaic and Minaic, the feminine dual form is *dty* and *dtyn*, respectively; in Qatabanian, *dw* (*dawā?*) is attested as a masculine dual.<sup>176</sup> It appears that in the dialect of our spells, the dual determinative-relative pronoun was indeclinable: the old masculine nominative form of the dual was used for all genders and cases. Based on Old Akkadian and Eblaite, we might interpret *š-w* as *tō* < \**tā*, another example of the “Canaanite shift,” similar to Punic *mu* < \**mō* < \**mā* “what.”<sup>177</sup> Based on Arabic (and Qatabanian?), on the other hand, we might interpret it as *tawō* < \**tawā*. The use of Egyptian *š* to render the initial consonant seems to suggest that the latter was voiceless, that is, *t* (unless *d* was realized something like [ž]).<sup>178</sup> However, the existence of a West Semitic determinative-relative particle \**tū*, alongside \**dū*,<sup>179</sup> is controversial. It has generally been held that Hebrew *ša* > *še*<sup>180</sup> and perhaps also standard Phoenician, Byblian, and Ammonite *š* (assuming it is not from *'ṣr*) are descended from \**tū*.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, Huehnergard has recently argued that only \**dū* existed in West Semitic, \**tū* being restricted to East Semitic.<sup>182</sup> Huehnergard’s cogent arguments against reconstructing Proto-Semitic biforms (each occurring freely in all environments) leave open a third possibility: that Proto-Semitic \**tū* developed a conditioned allomorph (sandhi variant) \**dū* in Proto-West-Semitic following words ending in a voiced segment<sup>183</sup> (e.g., \**ba'lum dū baytim* “the lord [the one] of the house”),<sup>184</sup> while remaining \**tū* following a pause (e.g., \**Tū baytim* “The one of the house is . . .” in sentence-initial position)

<sup>175</sup> Wright, *Grammar*, 1:273.

<sup>176</sup> Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar*, 41, 63, 66.

<sup>177</sup> Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, 41–42, 72.

<sup>178</sup> For the view that Ugaritic *d* was realized [ž], see W. R. Garr, “On Voicing and Devoicing in Ugaritic,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986) 47 n. 21 and the literature cited there. This appears to be a minority view; see Sivan, *Grammar*, 21; Tropper, *Grammatik*, 117–19.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Ugaritic *d*, Hebrew *zū*, Old Byblian *z-*, Old Aramaic and Samalian *zy* = *dī*, Arabic *dū*, etc. discussed by Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 85–87; and by J. Huehnergard, “On the Etymology of the Hebrew Relative *še-*,” in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz; Publications of the Institute for Advanced Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 110–14.

<sup>180</sup> This vowel change may be the outward manifestation of a folk etymology which took *ša-* as a contracted form of *'ṣer*.

<sup>181</sup> Harris, *Development*, 69–70; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 85–87.

<sup>182</sup> Huehnergard, “Etymology,” 116–19.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. the assimilatory voicing in Ugaritic noted by Garr, “On Voicing,” 45–52.

<sup>184</sup> For this reconstructed example and the ones that follow, see Huehnergard, “Etymology,” 114; and idem, “Afro-Asiatic,” 151, 153.

or after words ending in a voiceless segment (e.g., *\*yušalbiš/yusalbis tā baytim* “he dressed the one of the house”). In our text, *š-w* introduces a nonrestrictive relative clause (or an appositional noun-phrase) and, as such, is presumably preceded by a pause (indicated by a comma in the translation above). In some of the later copies of our spell (Pepy I and Pepy II), *š-w* is omitted,<sup>185</sup> making the relative clause asyndetic or turning it into an independent clause. This has the appearance of a deliberate stylistic change. Did Pepy I have the Semitic spells rechecked by the priests of Byblos?<sup>186</sup> The fact that the omission of this word does not change the meaning of the sentence according to our decipherment is evidence that the decipherment is correct.

*t-m-t = ta/imītu* “deals death,” a *hiphil* imperfect with the *h* elided; cf. Hebrew *tāmīt*, Amarna 238:33 *ti-mi-tu-na-nu* “you put us to death,” Moabite *wšb* “and I brought back,” and so on.<sup>187</sup> From this form, it is clear that the dialect of our spells cannot be a direct ancestor of Ugaritic, which has a *shaphel* instead of a *hiphil*. Nor can it be a direct ancestor of Proto-Aramaic, at least according to the view that Old Aramaic consistently preserved *h* in the *haphel* imperfect.<sup>188</sup> Even according to the view that there are *h*-less forms of the *haphel* imperfect in Old Aramaic (not to mention Samalian),<sup>189</sup> it must be assumed that the forms with *h* reflect the original state of affairs.<sup>190</sup> In short, deletion of the *binyan* marker in the imperfect

<sup>185</sup> Sethe, *Pyramidentexte*, 1:222; *Les textes de la pyramide de Pépy 1er* (ed. Jean Leclant; Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2001) P/A/E 26, pl. IX; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, Supplement 77 (PT 728 §2256).

<sup>186</sup> This king’s ties to the priests of Ba‘lat and *H̄y-t̄w* at Byblos seem to have been even stronger than those of Unas, if it is permissible to judge from the number of objects bearing his name found there; see M. Wright, “Literary Sources for the History of Palestine and Syria: Contacts Between Egypt and Syro-Palestine During the Old Kingdom,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988) 148–49.

<sup>187</sup> Rainey, *Canaanite*, 2:46, 184, 190; Izre’el, “Canaanite Varieties,” 87; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 56.

<sup>188</sup> So R. Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10.-8. Jh. v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969) 66 n. 46; P.-E. Dion, *La langue de Ya’udi: Description et classement de l’ancien parler de Zencirli dans le cadre des langues sémitiques du nord-ouest* (Editions SR 1; Waterloo, Ont.: Editions SR, 1974) 431–32 n. 10; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 55, 58.

<sup>189</sup> So M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 68; Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 133.

<sup>190</sup> Even if they are nothing more than historical spellings, they still attest to the preservation of *h* in an earlier period. The only other possibility is that they are merely morphophonemic spellings reflecting no phonetic reality in any period; in that unlikely case, they would not preclude a filial relationship with our dialect.

of *hiphil* (> *yiphil* in Phoenician) can be reconstructed for Proto-Canaanite but not for Proto-Aramaic. For the rendering with Egyptian *t*, see chapter 4 below.

*i-t-h-nw-w = yaduhinnō/iduhinnō*<sup>191</sup> “their hand”; cf. *rd.k* “your foot,” referring to a snake in PT 380.<sup>192</sup> It is possible that *Rīr-Rīr* was depicted anthropomorphically with physical hands, but equally possible that this is merely a figurative expression, as in Gen 9:5 “from the hand [*yad*] of every beast.” An Egyptian spell in the same series (PT 298 §442c) threatens the invading snake with decapitation by the hand (*drt*) of the feline goddess Mafdet. There we are probably to imagine a cat cutting off the snake’s head with a knife held in its paw, as in later depictions.<sup>193</sup> For the suffixed pronoun, see pp. 48–50 above. For the rendering with Egyptian *t*, see chapter 4 below.

*t-m-t i-t-h-nw-w = ta/imītu yaduhinnō/iduhinnō* “their hand deals death”; cf. “I deal death [?āmīt] and give life . . . none can deliver from My hand (*yādī*)” (Deut 32:39). The imperfect expresses habitual action. The word *yd* “hand” is the grammatical subject, as frequently in biblical poetry. The verb–subject word order found here is typical of “the earliest forms of most West Semitic languages” and is believed to go back to Proto-Semitic.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>191</sup> For the form *idu-*, see Militarev and Kogan, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, 1:262–63. I suspect that we are dealing here with vowel syncope: *yaduhinnō* > *yduhinnō* > *iduhinnō*.

<sup>192</sup> Meurer, *Feinde*, 284.

<sup>193</sup> C. K. Wilkinson, “Egyptian Wall Paintings: The Metropolitan Museum’s Collection of Facsimiles,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 36 no. 4 (spring 1979) 15 (and cover photograph); R. H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003) 221.

<sup>194</sup> Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” 154.

## 4. Old Egyptian Phonology

As a general rule, transcriptions are indispensable for reconstructing the phonology of dead languages, and Egyptian is no exception. As we shall see below, the pronunciation of Old Egyptian is far more controversial than the pronunciation of Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian, presumably because there has been, until now, a dearth of reliable transcriptional evidence from the Old Kingdom. Thus, it is not unreasonable to expect that our spells will shed new light on the phonology of Old Egyptian. Let us begin with the plosives:

| Egyptian | Semitic | Examples                                |
|----------|---------|---|
| <τ>      | /t/     | <i>i-ti-i-ti-i = ³itē-³itē</i>          |
| <τ>      | /t̪/    | <i>b-i-ti-i = baytī</i>                 |
| <τ>      | /t/     | <i>p-h-ti-i = pāhōtī</i>                |
| <τ>      | /t̪/    | <i>p-t̪-ti-i = putī/putōtī</i>          |
| <δ>      | /d/     | <i>n-t(-i) = niṭē</i>                   |
| <δ>      | /d/     | <i>t-ti-i = dōdī</i>                    |
| <δ>      | /t/     | <i>p-t̪-ti-i = putī/putōtī</i>          |
| <δ>      | /t̪/    | <i>t-m-t̪ = ta/imītu</i>                |
| <δ>      | /t̪/    | <i>t-w-b = tu/iwbu</i>                  |
| <δ>      | /d/     | <i>i-t̪-h-nw-w = yaduhinnō/iduhinnō</i> |
| <k>      | /k̪/    | <i>k-w = kawwu</i>                      |
| <k>      | /k̪/    | <i>k-b-b-h = kabōbuhu</i>               |
| <k>      | /g/     | <i>Kbn- = Gbl<sup>1</sup></i>           |

It is striking that Egyptian <d>, <δ>, and <g> do not appear anywhere in this chart; only Egyptian <τ>, <t̪>, and <k> are found. This may indicate that Old Egyptian /d/, /d̪/, and /g/ had extreme VOT values,<sup>2</sup> whether positive or negative,

<sup>1</sup> This Old Egyptian toponym, although attested in our spells, may have a very different source than the lexical items above. Nevertheless, it fits perfectly into the pattern of renderings exhibited by them.

<sup>2</sup> VOT is the abbreviation for “voice onset time,” referring to the length of time (in milliseconds) between the release of a plosive and the start of vocal-cord vibration.

that made them very different from all of the Semitic dental and velar plosives. To illustrate the point, we may imagine a Navajo hearing Spanish for the first time from the Franciscan missionaries of San Gabriel, New Mexico, in 1598. In modern Navajo, the mean VOT for /k/ is 154 ms., and the mean VOT for /g/ is 45 ms.<sup>3</sup> In modern Spanish, on the other hand, the VOT for /k/ is around 20 ms., while the VOT for /g/ has a negative value.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Navajo /k/ has such a high VOT that Spanish /k/ (not to mention Spanish /g/) sounds more like Navajo /g/! If these values go back to 1598, Navajo /k/ would have been of little use in rendering the two Spanish velar plosives; Navajo /g/ might well have been used for both.

The renderings cited above from the Pyramid Texts are quite different from the ones in New Kingdom texts summarized in the following table:

| Egyptian | Semitic | Number of Examples <sup>5</sup> |
|----------|---------|---------------------------------|
| <t>      | /t/     | 45                              |
| <t>      | /d/     | 2                               |
| <t>      | /t̪/    | 2                               |
| <t>      | /s/     | 8                               |
| <t>      | /t/     | 5                               |
| <d>      | /d/     | 10                              |
| <k>      | /k/     | 24                              |
| <k>      | /g/     | 5                               |
| <g>      | /g/     | 4                               |
| <g>      | /k/     | 5                               |
| <k>      | /k/     | 17                              |
| <k>      | /g/     | 8                               |

The differences between the two sets of renderings should not surprise us. Variation in the rendering of the Semitic voiceless (plain and emphatic) plosives is found in later times as well, in Greek transcriptions. For example, Phoenician *ktn* “tunic” appears in Greek not only as χιτών (already in Homer) but also as κιθών

<sup>3</sup> J. McDonough and P. Ladefoged, “Navajo Stops,” UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics 84 (June, 1993) 154.

<sup>4</sup> P. Ladefoged, *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages* (2nd ed.; Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005) 137.

<sup>5</sup> This table is based on Table 3 in J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 435–37 (cf. the explanation on p. 431). Renderings with fewer examples than four have been omitted here except when needed for comparison with the Pyramid Texts.

(Ionic) and κιτών (Doric).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Greek transcriptions of the Hebrew letter-names *tet*, *kap̄*, and *taw* (τηθ, χαφ, θων) and the corresponding Syriac letter-names (תַּתָּ, χַפָּ, θַוָּ) are very different from the Greek letter names borrowed from Phoenician (θῆτα, κάππα, ταῦ).<sup>7</sup> Some of the variation in the Greek transcriptions has been attributed to diachronic change on the Semitic side.<sup>8</sup> It goes without saying that the possibility of diachronic change must also be kept in mind when comparing the Egyptian renderings of Semitic in the Old Kingdom with those in the New Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> In short, there is no compelling reason to expect the renderings in the Old Kingdom to be the same as those in the New Kingdom.

Also worthy of note is the use of Egyptian <‡>, alongside <t>, in rendering the Semitic dental plosives. There may even be an example of <ti> serving as a phonetic complement of <‡>, if *p-t-ti-i* represents *putī* rather than *putōtī*. How are we to explain these renderings? It seems likely that Egyptian <‡> was realized [t̪] at the beginning of the Old Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Were the Semitic dental plosives perceived by the Egyptians to be palatalized in the vicinity of the vowel /i/? Do *t-m-t*, *i-t-h-nw-w*, *t-w-b*, and *p-t-ti-i* represent [t̪imi:t̪u], [tidyuhinno:], [t̪iwbu], and [put̪i:], respectively? Evidence for these vocalizations (alongside other possibilities) has been presented above, but they are obviously far from certain.

There are other possible explanations for the use of Egyptian <‡> in our spells. It is well known that Egyptian [t̪] was subsequently de-palatalized in most words, merging with /t/. Two misspellings with <t> for <‡> appear already in the Pyramid

<sup>6</sup> E. Y. Kutscher, “Contemporary Studies in North-western Semitic,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 10 (1965) 25–26; É. Masson, *Recherches sur les plus anciens emprunts sémitiques en grec* (Études et commentaire 67; Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1967) 27–29. As noted by Kutscher, the variation between χιτών and κιτών may be the result of an inner-Greek development (dissimilation or metathesis).

<sup>7</sup> T. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1904) 125–28.

<sup>8</sup> Kutscher, “Contemporary Studies,” 31–33; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer: samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten. Aramaistische Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Deutung, Grammatik/Wörterbuch, deutsch-aramäische Wortliste, Register* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984; addenda and corrections, 1994) 1:125–26; J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik* (3rd ed. by M. G. Amadas Guzzo with W. R. Mayer; Analecta orientalia 55; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1999) 18–22.

<sup>9</sup> For the theory that Pre-Egyptian \*/d/ shifted from a voiced plosive to a voiceless unaspirated one before the end of the Old Kingdom, see J. Vergote, “Egyptian,” in *Current Trends in Linguistics* (ed. T. A. Sebeok; 14 vols.; The Hague: Mouton, 1963–) 6:534.

<sup>10</sup> Vergote, “Egyptian,” 535; E. Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik* (Analecta orientalia 34/39; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicalum, 1955/1964) 48–49 §§100–111.

Texts of Pepy II.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the merger is thought to have occurred “around the end of the Old Kingdom”<sup>12</sup> or “probably before the end of the Old Kingdom.”<sup>13</sup> The use of <t> in our spells may point to a somewhat earlier date. Texts written in foreign scripts are normally less susceptible to historical spelling, and it is therefore not surprising that they tend to reveal the occurrence of sound change long before misspellings begin to appear in texts written in their usual scripts.<sup>14</sup> Another possibility is that the Semitic spells were reduced to writing by a scribe of Canaanite origin<sup>15</sup> who was unable to give <t> its proper palatalized realization and, as a result, used <t> and <đ> interchangeably. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive; if it is true that “sizable numbers of foreigners were present in Egypt during the Old Kingdom,”<sup>16</sup> then it is permissible to consider the possibility that the merger of t with đ began among foreigners and then spread to native Egyptians. In any event, it is worth noting that all of the examples of Egyptian <đ> used to render the Semitic dental plosives are in the second series of protective spells. This may indicate that the two series had separate origins.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the scribe who recorded the first series, unlike the scribe who recorded the second, distinguished <đ> from <t> thanks to his origin, education, or earlier date.

The pronunciation of <i> (reed-leaf) is illuminated by the initial sign of *i-ʒ-i*. In Middle Kingdom group writing, initial <i> is used to render Semitic /<sup>2</sup>a/ (e.g., *ib-* = <sup>2</sup>*ab-*) as well as /<sup>2</sup>i/ (e.g., *iʒ-* = <sup>2</sup>*il-*).<sup>18</sup> In our texts, too, we find initial <i> used to render Semitic /<sup>2</sup>a/ (*i-ʒ-i* = <sup>2</sup>*aryu*) as well as /<sup>2</sup>i/ (*im-* = <sup>2</sup>*immu-*, *i-ti* = <sup>2</sup>*itē*). This seems to show that, already in Old Egyptian, <i> had a realization [?] in initial position, at least when the following vowel was unstressed.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Edel, *Grammatik*, 49 §112. I am indebted to J. P. Allen for this reference.

<sup>12</sup> C. Peust, *Egyptian Phonology: An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language* (Monographien zur ägyptischen Sprache 2; Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt, 1999) 123.

<sup>13</sup> Vergote, “Egyptian,” 535.

<sup>14</sup> See R. C. Steiner, “Papyrus Amherst 63: A New Source for the Language, Literature, Religion, and History of the Arameans,” in *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches: Papers Delivered at the London Conference of the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London, 26<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> June 1991* (ed. M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman; *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 4*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 202–3.

<sup>15</sup> See at chapter 5 nn. 14–15 below.

<sup>16</sup> D. B. Redford, “The Acquisition of Foreign Goods & Services in the Old Kingdom,” *Scripta Mediterranea* 2 (1981) 9.

<sup>17</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 14–15 and at chapter 3, n. 45 above.

<sup>18</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 492–96.

<sup>19</sup> See Edel, *Grammatik*, 60 §137. A. Loprieno (*Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995] 35) writes that this realization of <i>

Another instructive rendering is found in  $\text{‘-b-š-w} = \text{‘ubušū}$  “hurry.” Although this is the only example of Egyptian  $\langle\langle\rangle$  used to render Semitic / $\text{c}/$  in the Semitic passages of the Pyramid Texts, it is corroborated by what appears to be a Semitic loanword in a purely Egyptian passage of the Pyramid Texts: Egyptian  $\text{‘š} <$  Semitic \* $\text{‘iš}$  “tree, wood.”<sup>20</sup> This parallel to the verb for “hurry” is virtually perfect, since it exhibits both  $\langle\langle\rangle = */\text{c}/$  and  $\langle\text{š}\rangle = */\text{š}/$ .

The use of Egyptian  $\langle\langle\rangle$  to render Semitic  $*\text{c}/$  has long been known from later periods. Thus, Egyptian  $\langle\langle\rangle$  is “common in the onomastic *Ammu*” in texts from the Middle Kingdom (Sinuhe and the execration texts),<sup>21</sup> and it is used to render Semitic / $\text{c}/$  in the divine name *B’l* and many other common words in New Kingdom texts.<sup>22</sup> Now we have evidence from the Old Kingdom, as well. This new evidence supports the view of those scholars (G. Conti, W. A. Ward, J. Osing, G. Takács, A. Loprieno, W. Schenkel, and J. Zeidler) who hold that Egyptian  $\langle\langle\rangle$  was realized as a pharyngeal in the Old Kingdom, as it was in later times.<sup>23</sup>

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developed “by the beginning of the Middle Kingdom,” which he dates to 2000 B.C.E. (*ibid.*, 33 note a).

<sup>20</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 60–62 above.

<sup>21</sup> Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 490, with examples on pp. 491 and 492.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 93–94, 435, and passim. It is also used to render Aramaic / $\text{c}/$  in dozens of words in Papyrus Amherst 63 (early third century B.C.E.); see R. C. Steiner and A. Mosak Moshavi, “A Selective Glossary of Northwest Semitic Texts in Egyptian Script,” in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 21; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 1262–63 and passim.

<sup>23</sup> G. Conti, “Il sistema consonantico egiziano,” *Oriens Antiquus* 15 (1976) 52–53; W. A. Ward, “Reflections on Methodology in Egypto-Semitic Lexicography,” in *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Olga Tufnell* (ed. J. N. Tubb; Occasional Publications, University of London, Institute of Archaeology 11; London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985) 240–41; J. Osing, “Zum Lautwert von  $\text{z}$  und  $\text{‘}$ ,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 24 (1997) 223–29; G. Takács, *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian* (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 48; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 1:92–98, 341–44, 346–67. The aforementioned scholars defend the traditional view that Egyptian  $\text{‘}$  is the reflex of Egypto-Semitic \* $\text{c}$ . Other scholars believe that it is the reflex of Egypto-Semitic \* $\text{d}$  but that it turned into a voiced pharyngeal before (or during) the Old Kingdom: Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian*, 31; W. Schenkel, *Einführung in die altägyptische Sprachwissenschaft* (Orientalische Einführungen; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990) 27–28, 55; J. Zeidler, “Altägyptisch und Hamito-Semitisch: Bemerkungen zu den *Vergleichenden Studien* von Karel Petráček,” *Lingua Aegyptia* 2 (1992) 209–10. (Four of these references are from Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 100–101; I am indebted to A. K. Eyma for the reference to Takács’s discussion).

Additional examples of Egyptian <‐> rendering Semitic /č/ in loanwords have been adduced by O. Rössler. The earliest one, by far, is from the words for “finger”: Egyptian *db* and Proto-Semitic \**išba*.<sup>24</sup> In Rössler’s view, the Semitic word may well be “eine uralte Entlehnung aus dem Ägyptischen.”<sup>25</sup> Rössler is aware of the problem with this suggestion: “Nun werden zwar Wörter aus dem Bereich des Grundvokabulars gewöhnlich nicht entlehnt. . .”<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, he argues: “‘Finger’ ist im Zusammenhang mit der kulturhistorisch ältesten Form des Siegels, nämlich durch Fingerabdruck, gleichzeitig ein eminentes Kulturwort.”<sup>27</sup>

If \**išba* is a borrowing of Egyptian *db* “finger,” it exhibits a very different rendering of Egyptian /d/ than does the word *tabbaat* “ring (incl. signet ring)” in Hebrew (and perhaps Phoenician),<sup>28</sup> borrowed from Egyptian *db.t* “seal.” If we attribute the difference in rendering to a difference in date, the former borrowing would have to be very early indeed, since even the latter borrowing has been tentatively dated to the third millennium, based on the preservation of the Egyptian feminine ending -t reflected in *tabbaat*.<sup>29</sup> Even if the borrowing of Egyptian *db* does not go back to Proto-Semitic times, it would still need to have been early enough to have spread into every branch of Semitic after the initial borrowing.

It is important to understand the ramifications of Rössler’s suggestion. It presupposes that Egyptian /č/ was rather close in pronunciation to Semitic /č/ at the time of “eine uralte Entlehnung aus dem Ägyptischen.” This would be the earliest direct evidence for the pronunciation of Egyptian /č/, far earlier than the evidence of the Pyramid Texts. Now, most Egyptologists agree that Egyptian /č/ was close in pronunciation to Semitic /č/ beginning in the Middle Kingdom (Execration Texts). From that period on, Egyptian /č/ and Semitic /č/ were used to render each

<sup>24</sup> The latter is attested in every branch of Semitic; see A. Militarev and L. Kogan, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 278; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000–) 1:227–28.

<sup>25</sup> O. Rössler, “Das Ägyptische als semitische Sprache,” in *Christentum am Roten Meer* (ed. F. Altheim and R. Stiehl; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971–73) 1:304. According to him, it is also possible that *išba* is a product of dissimilation from an original \**tb*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. In Baines’s view (e-mail communication, February 12, 2009), this argument is “dubious, since the use of artifacts for sealing goes back before 5000 BCE in Syria, a bit later in Palestine and Egypt.”

<sup>28</sup> See *KAI* 51 l. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 173; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999) 247; cf. T. O. Lambdin, “Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 73 (1953) 151.

other, because they were both voiced pharyngeals. Rössler's suggestion pushes this situation all the way back to prehistoric times. There would be no conceivable reason for the early Semites to use Semitic /<sup>c</sup>/ to render Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ unless the latter were a voiced pharyngeal.

Rössler's suggestion is not the only way to explain the similarity between Egyptian *db<sup>c</sup>* and Proto-Semitic \**išba<sup>c</sup>-*. Before Rössler, the scholarly consensus was that these words for "finger" were cognates. It was universally assumed that Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ and Semitic /<sup>c</sup>/ were genetically related.<sup>30</sup> Other examples of the correspondence were cited as well, for example, Egyptian 'ȝ "ass" = Proto-West-Semitic \**ayr-* "ass." It was also noted that the eye-hieroglyph had the phonemic value /<sup>c</sup>n/, apparently preserving an obsolete Egyptian word for "eye" (from the time when the writing system was invented) that resembled Proto-Semitic \**ayn-* "eye."<sup>31</sup> Thus, Pre-Egyptian \**n* "eye" = Proto-Semitic \**ayn-* "eye." The "ass" cognate-pair and the "eye" cognate-pair seemed to be mutually corroborating, since both have an initial /<sup>c</sup>/, a final resonant, and (in Semitic) a medial diphthong /ay/.

The assumption that words for "finger," "eye," and "ass" are cognates does not provide direct proof that Old Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ was a pharyngeal, in the way that Rössler's view of the word for "finger" does, but it does provide indirect proof. All Egyptologists agree that Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ was a pharyngeal by the Middle Kingdom or, at least, the New Kingdom, and all Semitists agree that Proto-Semitic \*<sup>c</sup>/ was a pharyngeal. If Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ corresponds to Proto-Semitic/Proto-West-Semitic \*<sup>c</sup>/ in cognates, the only reasonable conclusion is that Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ was always a pharyngeal. Otherwise we are faced with an extraordinary coincidence, whereby only after the Old Kingdom did Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ come to have the same realization as the Proto-Semitic/Proto-West-Semitic phoneme to which it corresponds.

All of this is fairly obvious and would not require any explanation were it not for Rössler's claim that Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ could not originally have been a pharyngeal because it exhibits incompatibility with Egyptian dentals but not with Egyptian /h/.<sup>32</sup> In his view, Egyptian /<sup>c</sup>/ is the reflex of four Proto-Afroasiatic voiced dental

<sup>30</sup> The idea that the common ancestor of Egyptian and Proto-Semitic had a voiced pharyngeal is hardly surprising, since other members of the Afroasiatic family (East Cushitic, Berber) also have a voiced pharyngeal; see Rössler, "Das Ägyptische," 276 n. 1. Although the presence of the sound in these Afroasiatic branches does not prove that Proto-Afroasiatic had it (until an actual lexical item containing it is reconstructed), it is still suggestive.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the ear-hieroglyph *idn* and perhaps also the hand-hieroglyph *d*.

<sup>32</sup> Rössler, "Das Ägyptische," 276-77. Cf. H. Satzinger, "Egyptian 'Ayin in Variation with D," *Lingua Aegyptia* 6 (1999) 142: "Rössler's approach is not based on etymologies but

plosives and spirants: \*/d/, \*/d̪/, \*/z/, and \*/d̪/.<sup>33</sup> Most of his followers appear to have modified his theory, making \*/d/ the sole (or, at least, primary) source of Egyptian /c/. Either way, the theory posits a shift of \*/d/ to /c/.

What would the date of such a development be? According to Schenkel, Rössler dated it to prehistoric times;<sup>34</sup> as we have seen, that dating is implicit in Rössler's view of the relationship between Eg. *qb*<sup>c</sup> and Proto-Semitic \**ʔisba*<sup>c</sup>. Some of Rössler's followers (including Schenkel) continue to believe that the change occurred before the Old Kingdom and, hence, that Old Egyptian /c/ was a voiced pharyngeal.<sup>35</sup> Others (primarily F. Kammerzell and T. Schneider) hold that it occurred *after* the Old Kingdom and, hence, that Old Egyptian /c/ was not a voiced pharyngeal.<sup>36</sup>

The view of Kammerzell and Schneider rests on the tacit assumption that \*/d/ > /c/ was a purely phonetic shift, which did not result in a phonemic merger. However, there is no reason to make such an assumption. If there was such a shift, it is far simpler to assume that it merged Pre-Egyptian \*/d/ with an already existing voiced pharyngeal, viz., Pre-Egyptian \*/c/, found in the words for "finger," "eye," and "ass." If we make the further assumption that Pre-Egyptian /c/ was a rare phoneme whose frequency increased dramatically as a result of the merger, it is easy to explain both the evidence that /c/ is incompatible with the dentals and the lack of evidence that /c/ is incompatible with /h/.

One of the arguments presented by Schneider for his view is based on his own conjecture concerning the divine name *H̄y-tʒw*.<sup>37</sup> As he himself admits, the name has a perfectly good Egyptian interpretation: "Der heiß/glühend erscheint."<sup>38</sup> Despite this, he insists on taking it as a transcription of a Semitic divine name, *Attaru*, that was later reinterpreted by the Egyptians. He begins with the premise that "um 2400 v.Chr., die Phoneme, die mit den ägyptologischen Transkriptions-symbolen <ḥ>, <c> . . . bezeichnet werden, mit Sicherheit nicht die Lautwerte /h/,

rather on his crucial observation of the incompatibilities (co-occurrence restrictions) of root consonants."

<sup>33</sup> Rössler, "Das Ägyptische," 276, 301.

<sup>34</sup> Schenkel, *Einführung*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> See n. 23 above.

<sup>36</sup> F. Kammerzell, "The Sounds of a Dead Language: Reconstructing Egyptian Phonology," *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 1 (1998) 36–37; Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 99–102; T. Schneider, "Etymologische Methode, die Historizität der Phoneme und das ägyptologische Transkriptionsalphabet," *Lingua Aegyptia* 11 (2003) 196.

<sup>37</sup> T. Schneider, "Wer war der Gott 'Chajtau,'" in *Les Civilisations du bassin méditerranéen: Hommages à Joachim Śliwa* (ed. K. M. Ciałowicz and J. A. Ostrowski; Cracow: Université Jagellonne, 2000) 218; idem, "Etymologische Methode," 196.

<sup>38</sup> Schneider, "Chajtau," 218. See chapter 3, n. 71 above.

/s/ . . . besaßen. . . .”<sup>39</sup> Let us examine the methodology that underlies this assertion, keeping in mind its use of the term “Phoneme.”

Schneider’s method of reconstructing the phonetic values of Old Egyptian phonemes can be seen in his discussion of /h/: “<h> entspricht genuin dem Pharyngal /s/ bzw. dem velaren Frikativ /g/ und dürfte auch im Alten Reich noch ähnlich gelautet haben.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, Schneider’s method rests on the assumption that the phonetic values of Old Egyptian phonemes are the same as those of the Semitic phonemes to which they correspond (in the cognates proposed by Rössler and himself). Let us apply this method to a somewhat broader selection of Egyptian phonemes. Here is an excerpt from the correspondence chart that Schneider adduces as evidence:<sup>41</sup>

|          | äg. | Entspr.  |
|----------|-----|----------|
| 7. TRIAS | h   | h        |
|          | h   | h, g (q) |
|          | h   | g        |
| 8. TRIAS | h   | h        |
|          | h   | c        |
|          | h   | c        |

As we have seen, Schneider asserts that the phoneme conventionally transliterated /h/ exhibits two correspondences and hence two phonetic values during the Old Kingdom, viz., [g] and [c]. The logic of his method dictates that something similar is true of the phoneme conventionally transliterated /h/: since it exhibits three correspondences in his chart, it must have had three phonetic values during the Old Kingdom, viz., [h], [g] and [c]. Thus, Schneider’s method leads to the conclusion that the phoneme conventionally transliterated /h/ had the two phonetic values of the phoneme conventionally transliterated /h/ plus one additional value. But if both realizations of /h/ coincide with those of /h/, why does Schneider call the former a phoneme? And why does he not show us the telltale interchanges that would inevitably result if both of the phonetic values of /h/ belonged to /h/

<sup>39</sup> Schneider, “Chajtau,” 218.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 218–19.

<sup>41</sup> T. Schneider, “Beiträge zur sogenannten ‘Neueren Komparatistik,’” *Lingua Aegyptia* 5 (1997) 192.

as well.<sup>42</sup> We conclude that Schneider's method wreaks gratuitous havoc on the phonological system of Old Egyptian and must be considered fatally flawed.

Let us return now to Rössler. In presenting his theory of the origin of Egyptian /χ/, Rössler discusses the genesis of this sound in the languages of the world:

Ein ‘Ayn in der Aussprache derjenigen heute lebenden Sprachen, die es als solches besitzen, ist ja nichts anderes als die allereinfachste, allerärmlichste Form eines spirantischen Stimmhaften, gewissermaßen reiner spirantischer Stimmton, die typische Verfallsform von Konsonanten. Es ist sehr gut vorstellbar, daß u. U. jeder beliebige stimmhafte Laut zu ‘Ayn degenerieren kann. Im Ägyptischen hat eine solche Entwicklung sämtliche stimmhaften apikalen Präpalatalen ergriffen.<sup>43</sup>

This is a highly idiosyncratic discussion. The idea that [χ] is a natural product of the weakening of any voiced consonant is nowhere to be found in the linguistic literature on lenition.<sup>44</sup> There are, of course, many examples of weakening involving [χ] in Semitic and Egyptian, but they all go in the opposite direction, with [χ] weakening to [χ̪] or disappearing altogether.<sup>45</sup> I have found only one well-documented case of a new [χ] arising in historical times, and in that case the sources are voiceless: Proto-Nootkan \*/q<sup>w</sup>/, \*/q<sup>ʔw</sup>/ > Nootka /χ/.<sup>46</sup>

The Nootka shift has been plausibly explained on the grounds that both [χ] and ejective uvulars involve larynx raising and constriction of the laryngeal

<sup>42</sup> Edel (*Grammatik*, 53 §119) notes that “in seltenen Fällen wechselt . . . h mit . . . g,” but he knows nothing of h interchanging with h.

<sup>43</sup> Rössler, “Das Ägyptische,” 276–77. It should be noted that one of the four (Egypto-) Semitic consonants that allegedly weakened to χ, viz., d, is believed today to be an ejective and, hence, voiceless. The modern transcription is š.

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., R. M. Kirchner, *An Effort-based Approach to Consonant Lenition* (Outstanding Dissertations in Linguistics; New York: Routledge, 2001); A. Cser, *The Typology and Modelling of Obstruent Lenition and Fortition Processes* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> The facts are so well known that there is no point in trying to survey the vast literature on the subject here. Suffice it to say that the weakening of χ is attested in Demotic of the Roman period, Akkadian, some varieties of Postbiblical Hebrew, most of the Late Aramaic dialects, some of the Modern South Arabian languages, some of the Ethiopian Semitic languages, a few modern Arabic dialects, and so on.

<sup>46</sup> E. Sapir, “The Rival Whalers: A Nitinat Story (Nootka Text with Translation and Grammatical Analysis),” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 3 (1924) 82; W. H. Jacobsen, “Origin of the Nootka Pharyngeals,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 35 (1969) 125–53; B. F. Carlson and J. H. Esling, “Phonetics and Physiology of the Historical Shift of Uvulars to Pharyngeals in Nuuchahnulth (Nootka),” *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 33 (2003) 183–93.

sphincter.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, the weakening of a plain voiced dental to [‘] makes no phonetic sense. The sound [‘] is produced by a series of difficult articulatory gestures, including movement of the tongue root back and down onto the epiglottis, which seals off the airway in a manner that reminded E. Sapir of strangulation.<sup>48</sup> Abraham Ibn Ezra (twelfth century) writes: “These two, ‘ayin and ḥet, are very difficult, and those who did not become accustomed to pronouncing them in their youth are not able to articulate them, like the Christians.”<sup>49</sup> Discussing the same two sounds in another place, he writes that “small children cannot pronounce them, and all Christians are completely unable to pronounce them, even if they are old.”<sup>50</sup> In modern Egypt, /‘/ is one of the last sounds to be acquired by children and “continue[s] to be mispronounced (as [?] or [Ø]) in isolated cases long after its acquisition as a phoneme.”<sup>51</sup> No wonder that it is “among the rarest of speech sounds.”<sup>52</sup> How can such a difficult sound result from weakening, a process associated with “ease of articulation”?<sup>53</sup>

It will be noted that Rössler cited no data in support of his sweeping typological claim. An attempt to rectify this omission has been made by Kammerzell. The latter is well aware of the obligation of the historical linguist to take naturalness into account when reconstructing sound changes. For example, in discussing the

<sup>47</sup> Carlson and Esling, “Phonetics,” 188.

<sup>48</sup> Sapir, “Rival Whalers,” 82: “of strangulated articulation”; J. Colarusso, “Pharyngeals and Pharyngealization in Salishan and Wakashan,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 51 (1985) 367; J. H. Esling, K. E. Fraser, and J. G. Harris, “Glottal Stop, Glottalized Resonants, and Pharyngeals: A Reinterpretation with Evidence from a Laryngoscopic Study of Nuuchahnulth (Nootka),” *Journal of Phonetics* 33 (2005) 396.

<sup>49</sup> Commentary to Exod 3:15. According to G. Lippmann, in his edition of Ibn Ezra’s *ספר חזות* (Fürth, 1827) 14b, the Hebrew should read: *ואלה שניהם עין חזות כבדים מאד*. ומי שלא נהג בנערכו לבטא בהם לא יוכל לדבר בהם, כמו הערלים. The inability of Christians to pronounce these sounds is mentioned also in a Jewish polemical work from medieval France; see D. Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979) 99 §82.

<sup>50</sup> Abraham Ibn Ezra, *שפה ברורה* (ed. G. Lippmann; Fürth, 1839) 18a.

<sup>51</sup> M. K. Nydell (Omar), *The Acquisition of Egyptian Arabic as a Native Language* (1973; repr., Georgetown University Classics in Arabic Language and Linguistics; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007) 56.

<sup>52</sup> Colarusso, “Pharyngeals,” 366. According to the website of the International Workshop on Pharyngeals & Pharyngealization, “pharyngeal sounds [are] present in only 1% of languages surveyed in the UPSID data base.” This includes sounds other than [‘].

<sup>53</sup> For the connection between lenition and ease of articulation, see R. Kirchner, “Consonant Lenition,” in *Phonetically Based Phonology* (ed. B. Hayes, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 314, and the literature cited there.

history of Egyptian /d/, he writes: “For reasons of markedness an unconditioned sound change of voiced /d/ to emphatic /t/ seems extremely improbable.”<sup>54</sup> But if so, what about /d/ > /t/? Do considerations of markedness make a shift to one of the rarest of speech sounds (at the other end of the vocal tract, no less) seem even more improbable? Not at all, says Kammerzell:

The proto-phoneme has to be reconstructed as a /d/, since the phonetic development of a dental obstruent into a pharyngeal fricative is much more probable than a sound change in the opposite direction. Thus, Rössler’s etymologies relating the arm hieroglyph to Semitic /d/ are quite consistent with our previous assumptions: by loss of distinctive features an original voiced dental stop /d/ became a neutral consonant possessing only one marked feature, [+voice]. This process of weakening is not uncommon in natural languages, compare for instance realisations like [mæ:ʔm] or [mæ:ʕam], [mʌ:ʔ] or [mʌ:ʕ], and ['ayʃno] for *madam* and *mother*, and *I don’t know* in certain varieties of Modern English (source: Thompson & Hopper 1997:7; cf. also t-glottaling in Cockney and in Glasgow English).<sup>55</sup>

According to this discussion, *madam*, *mother*, and *I don’t know* are pronounced with a pharyngeal “fricative” (represented by the IPA symbol [ʕ]) in certain varieties of Modern English. It is remarkable that no Egyptologist has dared to challenge this astonishing assertion. Even Takács, who rejects Rössler’s views, accepts Kammerzell’s assertion at face value, and he takes the trouble to reproduce the transcriptions [mæ:ʕm], [mʌ:ʕ], and ['ayʃno] adduced as evidence by Kammerzell.<sup>56</sup>

Kammerzell is careful to tell us the precise dialects of English that exhibit t-glottaling, but when it comes to the dialects that allegedly weaken English /d/ to a pharyngeal “fricative,” he is surprisingly vague. Moreover, anyone interested in knowing what he means by “certain varieties of modern English” will be frustrated to find that the source he cites, “Thompson & Hopper 1997,” does not appear in the list of references at the end of his article. Fortunately, Kammerzell repeats his claim in a later article, citing:

- (6a) engl. (dialektal) *Madam* ['mæʃm]
- (6b) engl. (dialektal) *I don’t know* ['ayʃno] (Thompson & Hopper 1997:7)<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Kammerzell, “Sounds,” 34.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 29–30.

<sup>56</sup> Takács, *Etymological Dictionary*, 1:342.

<sup>57</sup> F. Kammerzell, “Zur Interpretation einiger Beispiele graphemsprachlicher Varianz im Ägyptischen,” *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 2 (1999) 65.

According to the later article, the source of the claim is “Thompson, Sandra A. & Paul J. Hopper. 1997. ‘Emergent grammar’ and argument structure: evidence from conversation. Handout zur Simon Dik Memorial Lecture, Amsterdam April 25, 1997.” I found this claim so extraordinary that I sent both of the above passages to Hopper and Thompson for verification. Here is the joint reply that they have authorized me to publish:

Paul Hopper and Sandra Thompson state: “We deny that that we have ever claimed to have found pharyngeal consonants in English or any of its dialects. We consider such a supposition to be wildly improbable and the circulation of it irresponsible. We doubt that the possibility of such consonants in English has ever been entertained by serious linguists with a knowledge of English phonetics. We challenge the authors of the claim to produce for our inspection an actual text (as opposed to a bogus bibliographical reference) in which this alleged contention by us is shown to have been made.”<sup>58</sup>

Let us turn now to the evidence for Rössler’s proposal adduced by C. Peust: “A shift of dental stop to /χ/ is attested in Aramaic which clarifies that such a development is possible.”<sup>59</sup> This parallel is, of course, better documented than the parallel cited by Kammerzell, but it too is problematic. It is true that the Semitic phoneme that shifted to /χ/ in Aramaic corresponds to Arabic *qād*, but the phoneme in question (viz., \*/ʃ/) was not a dental stop. Even in Arabic, the realization as a dental stop (reflected in the transliteration *q*) is not original. It is well known that Sibawaihi describes it as a voiced lateral fricative, [ʒ].<sup>60</sup> In Proto-Semitic, it was probably an ejective (and hence voiceless) lateral with two allophones—one

<sup>58</sup> E-mail communication, September 18, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 100.

<sup>60</sup> See R. C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (American Oriental Series 59; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1977) 57–67, and the literature cited there; and K. Versteegh, “Dād,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (ed. K. Versteegh et al.; 5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2006–9) 1:544–45. The modern realization as a dental stop is a product of two mergers that took place after the Old Arabic period. First, the reflex of \*/ʃ/ merged with the reflex of \*/t/. The latter was an emphatic voiced interdental, [d̪], in Old Arabic, as it is to this day in bedouin dialects. It came to be pronounced [d] in urban dialects, when these dialects merged the interdental fricatives with the dental stops. Subsequently, speakers of urban dialects attempted to undo the first merger by introducing an artificial distinction into their pronunciation of Classical Arabic.

a fricative, [ʃ?], and the other, an affricate, [tʃ?].<sup>61</sup> In Aramaic, the evidence points to an original [tʃ?].<sup>62</sup>

It used to be assumed that the Aramaic reflex of Proto-Semitic \*/š/ migrated all the way to the lower pharynx without undergoing any merger until it merged with /č/, but the decipherment of the Aramaic text in Demotic script has made this assumption untenable. It is now clear that the Aramaic reflex of /š/ remained unmerged only during the first part of its journey, which probably looked something like [tʃ?] > [kʃ?] > [qx?] (or [kx?]).<sup>63</sup> After reaching the uvula (or velum), the phoneme remained distinct for a while, even though it was written with the same letter as /k/. In Western Aramaic, it merged by 500 B.C.E. with /g/,<sup>64</sup> which at the time was still a distinct phoneme, even though it was written with the same letter as /č/.<sup>65</sup> It was only later, probably around 200 B.C.E., that the merger product of /g/ and /š/ merged with /č/ in Western Aramaic.<sup>66</sup> The weakening posited by Rössler has little in common with this complex chain of events.

Finally, a word about the lists of Egypto-Semitic cognates compiled by Rössler and Schneider. Concerning these, Kammerzell writes: “A considerable set of quite well established Afroasiatic etymologies that include Egyptian cognates provides valuable insights into Egyptian phonology (cf. Rössler 1971, Schneider 1997).”<sup>67</sup> This assessment is worth examining, but the collections are far too large to be discussed here. Fortunately, Kammerzell has made things more manageable by picking what he presumably considers to be the three best examples of Egyptian /č/ corresponding to Semitic /d/. Let us look at one of these.

<sup>61</sup> See chapter 3, n. 163 above.

<sup>62</sup> R. C. Steiner, “Addenda to *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic*,” in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of His Eighty-fifth Birthday, November 14, 1991* (ed. A. S. Kaye; 2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991) 2:1500–1501.

<sup>63</sup> Steiner, “Addenda,” 1500–1501; E. Qimron, *ארמיית מקראית* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 2002) 13; and T. Notarius, “ʔq(n) ‘wood’ in the Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea: A Note on the Reflex of Proto-Semitic \*/š/ in Imperial Aramaic,” *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006) 104–5.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 1:101, 2:51. Beyer dates this change to around 600 B.C.E., but the earliest evidence adduced by him pertains to Eastern Aramaic.

<sup>65</sup> Steiner, “Addenda,” 1499–1500; Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 2:51; Qimron, *ארמיית מקראית*, 12–13; Steiner, “On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes (\*H > H and \*G > ġ) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005) 236–37; Notarius, “ʔq(n) ‘wood’,” 105.

<sup>66</sup> J. Blau, *On Polyphony in Biblical Hebrew* (Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 6.2; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982) 39–40, 70; Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 1:102, 2:51; Steiner, “On the Dating,” 239–40, 257; Notarius, “ʔq(n) ‘wood’,” 105.

<sup>67</sup> Kammerzell, “Sounds,” 29.

Kammerzell's second example is Old Egyptian *'b3* "lead, steer," compared with Arabic *dbr* "lead."<sup>68</sup> From Rössler, we learn that the Egyptian verb is used of ships and that the Arabic verb in question is *dabbara* in the second form.<sup>69</sup> Rössler also cites "Syr. 'egit, duxit,'" but Kammerzell omits that citation, presumably on the assumption that the Arabic form alone tells us all we need to know about the Semitic root. But does it? Here is E. Lane's definition of *dabbara*:

*He considered, or forecast, the issues, or results, of the affair, or event, or case; . . . or its end, issue, or result; . . . or he looked to what would, or might, be its result: and . . . he thought, or meditated, upon it; . . . and . . . he looked into it, considered it, examined it, or studied it, repeatedly, in order to know it, or until he knew it. . . . He did, performed, or executed, a thing, or an affair, with thought, or consideration. . . . He devised, planned, or plotted, a thing, . . . against another. And hence, He managed, conducted, ordered, or regulated, an affair; because the doing so requires consideration of the issues, or results, of an affair.*<sup>70</sup>

It will be noted that the verbs *lead* and *steer* used by Kammerzell to gloss *dabbara* are not among the score of verbs used by Lane.<sup>71</sup> The verbs closest in meaning to *lead* and *steer* in Lane's definition are *manage* and *conduct*, but neither *lead* nor *steer* can be substituted for *manage/conduct* in a sentence like "He managed/conducted the affair." Moreover, Lane's discussion makes it crystal clear that "manage, conduct (an affair)" is a secondary meaning. Hence, it may well be an inner-Arabic development, with no relevance to Proto-Semitic let alone Proto-Afroasiatic.<sup>72</sup>

Schneider's use of Arabic is equally problematic. Take, for example, his correspondence set no. 35, consisting solely of Egyptian *mrj* "lieben" and Arabic *māla*.<sup>73</sup> Based on H. Wehr's *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart* (a dictionary that deals with Modern Standard Arabic), he cites the meaning of *māla* as "(zu)geneigt sein, Sympathie empfinden für; gern haben." However, Wehr is careful to specify that it is with the preposition *'ilā* "to, towards" that *māla* has that meaning. In the continuation of Wehr's entry, we read (already

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Rössler, "Das Ägyptische," 286.

<sup>70</sup> E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863–77) 844 col. b.

<sup>71</sup> It is in Aramaic that *dbr* means "lead."

<sup>72</sup> For a warning about the use of Arabic secondary meanings in comparative lexicography, see n. 76 below. According to Ward ("Reflections," 241), Egyptian *'b3* is a denominative verb derived from *'b3* "scepter" and, hence, secondary as well.

<sup>73</sup> Schneider, "Beiträge," 198.

in the first English edition): “to lean (*‘alā* against); to revolt, rebel (*‘alā* against), be hostile (*‘alā* to s.o.); to be disinclined, be averse (*‘an* to s.th.); to have an antipathy, a distaste, a dislike (*‘an* for).”<sup>74</sup> In other words, *māla* has the neutral meaning “to lean”; it is the accompanying preposition that conveys whether the leaning is toward something, away from it, or against it. Schneider has fallen prey to one of the oldest fallacies in the history of lexicology, one that the great semanticist U. Weinreich called the “fallacy of overspecification.”<sup>75</sup>

To the unwary, the Arabic lexicon may seem like a candy store, where one can find whatever sweets one craves. In reality, it is more like a minefield.<sup>76</sup> Loanwords and loan translations must be avoided, but they are not always easy to recognize.<sup>77</sup> The same goes for secondary meanings and overly specific, contextual meanings. Even primary meanings in Arabic must be used with great caution. Although classical Arabic is remarkably archaic in the area of phonology and (to a lesser extent) morphology, it is far from archaic in the area of lexical semantics.<sup>78</sup> No competent Semitic linguist these days will accept an Afro-

<sup>74</sup> H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (ed. and trans. J. M. Cowan; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961) 935 s.v. *myl*.

<sup>75</sup> That is, the fallacy of “exaggerat[ing] the incidence of polysemy at the expense of vagueness or generality”; see U. Weinreich, “On the Semantic Structure of Language,” in *Universals of Language* (ed. J. H. Greenberg; 2nd ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966) 203 n. 53. For the history of this fallacy, with ancient and medieval examples (some very similar to Schneider’s treatment of *māla*), see R. C. Steiner, “Saadia vs. Rashi: On the Shift from Meaning-Maximalism to Meaning-Minimalism in Medieval Biblical Lexicology,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88 (1998) 230–35.

<sup>76</sup> The pitfalls of the Arabic lexicon have been discussed in a number of studies, including J. Kaltner, *The Use of Arabic in Biblical Hebrew Lexicography* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 28; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1996). Kaltner discusses common methodological mistakes involving the use of Arabic for comparative purposes. On p. 23, for example, he writes: “Sometimes a scholar will propose a reading of a Hebrew word that is based on a cognate Arabic word although study of the Arabic dictionaries shows that the meaning selected is not the basic or primary meaning of the word. . . . The Arabic meaning has been isolated and given far greater importance than the evidence allows.” On pp. 98–102, Kaltner lists fourteen “guidelines for the use of Arabic in Biblical Hebrew lexicography.” Unfortunately, it must be said that many of these commonsense caveats are violated in Schneider’s work.

<sup>77</sup> The ones from Aramaic are particularly troublesome.

<sup>78</sup> See the excursus entitled “Arabic and Semitic Lexicography,” in G. del Olmo Lete, *Questions of Semitic Linguistics: Root and Lexeme, The History of Research* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2008) 114–15. Olmo Lete warns that, in the area of semantics, Arabic is the least archaic of the languages customarily invoked in comparative Semitics, and he provides an important list of late semantic layers in Arabic that must be

asiatic cognate set consisting solely of Egyptian and Arabic, and yet seventy-two of Rössler's cognate sets and thirty-four of Schneider's are of precisely that type. With evidence of this kind, it is not difficult to make Egyptian /<sup>č</sup>/ correspond to virtually *any* Semitic consonant.

It ought to be obvious that the only rigorous method is to compare Egyptian with Proto-Semitic (as reconstructed by competent Semitists based on internal Semitic evidence) or, at least, Proto-West-Semitic. In the words of J. Huehnergard:

One of the greatest hindrances to the reconstruction of Proto-Afro-Asiatic has been the difficulty of establishing clear cognate sets across the vocabularies of the several branches (this has also, of course, impeded efforts to establish sound correspondences across the branches and to reconstruct Proto-Afro-Asiatic phonology). Essentially, this must await the working out of reconstructed proto-vocabularies for the individual branches, which is still in its beginning stages, except for Semitic.<sup>79</sup>

The adoption of such a methodology will drastically limit the number of cognates, but that is precisely the point. Instead of publishing large collections of what are likely to be chance similarities, we should be focusing our energies on a small selection of the very best cognates. Such a selection is given by Huehnergard at the end of the paragraph cited above: “Nevertheless, a few lexical items common to at least several of the branches may be mentioned, such as \**lis* ‘tongue,’ \**m-w-t/ mut* ‘to die,’ \**s(i)m* ‘name,’ and \**sin(n)* ‘tooth.’”<sup>80</sup> Huehnergard’s approach is a model of sobriety, rigor, and intellectual honesty that is well worth emulating.

Let me conclude by reiterating one of the key points of the above discussion: Rössler’s theory concerning the origin of Egyptian /<sup>č</sup>/ is not in any way incompatible with the use of Egyptian /<sup>č</sup>/ to render Semitic /<sup>č</sup>/ in the Old Kingdom; indeed, Rössler himself proposed an even earlier example of this rendering. There is no contradiction because, if there was a shift /d/ > /<sup>č</sup>/, it could well have occurred before the Old Kingdom (as some of Rössler’s followers maintain), and it could

avoided in etymological research: (1) the “Bedouin,” (2) the Islamic, (3) the military, (4) the sexual, (5) the medical and astronomical, (6) the zoological and botanical, and (7) the sociological. One may hope that Olmo Lete’s discussion will make clear to nonspecialists that the time for dabbling in the Arabic lexicon has long since passed.

<sup>79</sup> J. Huehnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (ed. R. D. Woodard; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 141.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

well have merged /d/ with a preexisting—but rare—pharyngeal /χ/. Thus, there is no reason to assume that /χ/ was pronounced as anything other than a voiced pharyngeal in the Old Kingdom.

## 5. Conclusions

Among the texts inscribed on the walls of Unas's pyramid, there are two series of spells designed to protect Unas's mummy against snakes. Portions of at least four of these serpent spells (PT 235, 236, 281, and 286) are orthographically distinct from the rest of the Pyramid Texts. They are characterized by exceptional phonetic spelling reminiscent of the “group writing” used to write foreign names and texts in later times. Moreover, they contain several occurrences of a very non-Egyptian sequence of three *aleph*'s that was frequently miswritten by Egyptian copyists.<sup>1</sup>

These passages, considered unintelligible by most students of the Pyramid Texts,<sup>2</sup> are composed in a very ancient Northwest Semitic dialect. When read as such, they fit seamlessly into their Egyptian context, forming three coherent bilingual units: PT 232-38, PT 281-82, and PT 286-87.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Semitic and Egyptian phrases are mutually elucidating. The decipherment of key Semitic phrases is confirmed by semantic counterparts in the Egyptian context,<sup>4</sup> and the Semitic, in turn, helps to clarify the Egyptian.<sup>5</sup> The decipherment is further confirmed by the fact that a scribal omission found in the Pyramid Texts of Unas's successors (Pepy I and Pepy II) makes perfect sense as a Semitic syntactic-stylistic variant.<sup>6</sup>

The spells presumably originated in the Levant. Their language seems to belong to the Canaanite branch of Northwest Semitic, to the exclusion of the Aramaic branch. This is suggested by a number of linguistic innovations: the elision of *h* in the *hiphil* imperfect,<sup>7</sup> the total assimilation of the final *n* of *min* “from,”<sup>8</sup> the use of *miya-* (instead of *man-*) for “who,”<sup>9</sup> the asymmetrical treatment of the

<sup>1</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 37–40 above and the appendix below.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 1, nn. 30–35 above.

<sup>3</sup> See the beginning of chapter 3 above.

<sup>4</sup> See at chapter 2, nn. 30–31 above.

<sup>5</sup> See the beginning of chapter 3 above.

<sup>6</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 185–86 above.

<sup>7</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 187–90 above.

<sup>8</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 166–69 above.

<sup>9</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 104–108 above.

voiceless interdental fricatives,<sup>10</sup> and perhaps the raising and rounding of *ā* to *ō* (the “Canaanite shift”).<sup>11</sup> All or most of these innovations can be reconstructed with some degree of plausibility for Proto-Canaanite, but not for Proto-Aramaic. This suggests that the split in Northwest Semitic between Proto-Canaanite and Proto-Aramaic had already taken place in the third millennium B.C.E., earlier than one might have imagined.

The historical evidence allows us to be more specific about the place of origin. Commercial relations between Egypt and the Levant are known from the reign of Unas and for more than a millennium before it.<sup>12</sup> During the Old Kingdom, much of the trade was funneled through the port of Byblos. Unas’s involvement with Byblos is reflected in his Pyramid Texts and depicted in the causeway leading to his pyramid. Stone vessels found at Byblos bear the names of Egyptian rulers of the third millennium B.C.E.: Unas, Pepy I, Pepy II, and their predecessors going back to Khasekhemwy in the Second Dynasty. They are believed to be dedications to the local cults of Ba‘lat and *H̄y-tʒw*.

The deity *H̄y-tʒw*, associated with Byblos and *Ngʒ(w)* (Lebanon), is of particular importance because he is invoked in one of the few passages that appears in both series of serpent spells (PT 282 §423b-c = PT 238 §242c). The fact that the repeated passage comes right after spells that contain Semitic phrases (PT 235-36 and 281) suggests that those phrases also came from Byblos, supplied by the priests of *H̄y-tʒw*. Some of these priests must have been able to speak Egyptian, since it was they who presumably appended the Egyptian spell invoking *H̄y-tʒw* to the Semitic spells.<sup>13</sup> If they also had scribal training, they could have written down the spells themselves; otherwise they could have dictated them to a professional scribe. In any case, it is clear from the Fifth Dynasty stone cylinder seal found at Byblos that there were worshippers of *H̄y-tʒw* there who were able to write Egyptian.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, there is one orthographic hint that the scribe who originally reduced the serpent spells to writing had at least a rudimentary knowledge of Canaanite.<sup>15</sup> Although these scraps of evidence seem to point to a native of Byblos, we cannot rule out the possibility that the priests dictated the spells to an Egyptian scribe who knew some Canaanite.

Did Byblian views concerning snakes have anything in common with Egyptian views at the time of the Pyramid Texts? Philo of Byblos, writing more

<sup>10</sup> See at chapter 3, n. 127 above.

<sup>11</sup> See at chapter 3, n. 136 above.

<sup>12</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 49–71 above.

<sup>13</sup> See at chapter 3, n. 150.

<sup>14</sup> See at chapter 1, n. 66 above.

<sup>15</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 109–10 above.

than two thousand years later, seems to have thought so: “So Taautos<sup>16</sup> himself regarded as divine the nature of the serpent and snakes, as did the Phoenicians and Egyptians after him.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea of Egyptians borrowing Semitic spells is not as outlandish as it may seem. Although Egypt was later to be known as “the mother of magicians,”<sup>18</sup> a number of Semitic spells in Egyptian script have been preserved from the New Kingdom on.<sup>19</sup> There is evidence that, even before the time of the pyramids, the Egyptians imported magic believed to be effective against dangerous creatures.<sup>20</sup> The Egyptians were not the only ones who imported foreign spells. More than a dozen early Mesopotamian incantations and rituals are written wholly or partly in foreign languages. It appears that foreign spells were viewed as ideal for counter-acting foreign demons:

From the mid-second millennium BC onwards, demons with foreign names are quite common in Egyptian magical texts. They are usually hostile beings who have no useful function and must be driven away. Nubian, Libyan and Syrian magicians are mentioned in spells, but foreign demons nearly all have names derived from the Semitic languages spoken in Syria-Palestine. . . . Spells to counteract these demons sometimes invoke Syrian deities. One of the main techniques for dealing with demonic possession was to find a being powerful enough to drive the demon out, or at least to negotiate with it.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> That is, Thoth.

<sup>17</sup> Philo of Byblos, *The Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes* (ed. H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden, Jr.; Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981) 63; cf. A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* (Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain 89; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 245.

<sup>18</sup> G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) 47. Cf. *Midrash Shemot Rabbah* (ed. A. Shanan; Jerusalem: Devir, 1984) 211: “At that point (upon seeing the miracle of the rod), Pharaoh began to laugh at them and crow at them like a cock, saying to them: ‘This is the level of your God’s (magical) skill? The normal practice is for people to bring their wares to a place where they are needed. Does anyone bring brine to Aspamia, fish to Acco? Don’t you know that I have mastery over all the magical arts?’ He had children brought from their school and they did the same thing. He even sent for his wife and she did it (too)!”

<sup>19</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 42–43 above. Cf. E. Bresciani, “Foreigners,” in *The Egyptians* (ed. S. Donadoni; Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 240: “It may have been necessary to address this ‘Asiatic’ illness in its own language.”

<sup>20</sup> See at chapter 1, n. 48 above.

<sup>21</sup> Pinch, *Magic*, 45. Cf. J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Nisaba 9; Leiden: Brill, 1978) viii: “Magic from adjoining countries, especially Nubia and Libya, was held in great esteem by the Egyptians.” Cf. also L. D. Morenz, “(Magische) Sprache

In our spells too, the hostile creatures are Semites, as are the powerful beings invoked to drive them away. In one spell, the snakes are called *kbnw* “Byblites”;<sup>22</sup> in two other spells, we find them invoked metaphorically as *ḥ3st/ḥ3zt* “foreign land.”<sup>23</sup> They are from Byblos, and so is *H̄y-tz̄w*. The divine mother snake is called *Rīr-Rīr*, a Semitic name that points to a Levantine origin.<sup>24</sup> In one spell, she is called “*Rīr-Rīr* of the sea,” possibly hinting that she came to Egypt by sea.<sup>25</sup> Her epithet, *’immu-hiwwi* “mother snake,” recalls the Sumerian divine name *’ama-ušum* (composed of the words *’ama* “mother” and *ušum* “snake”), attested as part of a longer name already in the Fara period.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to prove that the two expressions have a common origin, but if they do we are dealing with a concept of great antiquity.

One may view the presence of Semitic spells in the Pyramid Texts as the culmination of a series of imports from Byblos. The ships that brought logs from the forests of Lebanon may have also brought poisonous snakes from there as stowaways.<sup>27</sup> These two imports may have made a third import necessary: snake spells for use against Byblite snakes. It is to these snakes that the Semitic spells carved into the walls of Unas’s pyramid are addressed; it was not necessary for the Egyptians to understand them.

It is obvious that the spells in the Pyramid Texts, composed before the reign of Unas, are centuries older than any other West Semitic texts known to scholars. They are also older than both the first connected Akkadian texts (which make their appearance at the beginning of the reign of Sargon of Akkad)<sup>28</sup> and the Eblaite texts. The archives of Ebla were found in the administrative quarter of

der “geheimen Kunst,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 24 (1997) 198–99: “So heißt es in den *Zaubersprüchen für Mutter und Kind* auf einem Papyrus der Zweiten Zwischenzeit (P. Berlin 3027,27f): ‘Fließe aus, Asiatin, die aus dem Bergland gekommen ist, Nubierin, die aus der Wüste gekommen ist’. Man mag vermuten, daß solcherart ausländische Krankheitsdämonen am besten in *j3* anzusprechen wären.”

<sup>22</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 155–57 above.

<sup>23</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 148–49 above.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter 2 above.

<sup>25</sup> See chapter 3, n. 153 above.

<sup>26</sup> See at chapter 3, nn. 35–38 above.

<sup>27</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 68–69 above.

<sup>28</sup> J. Huehnergard, and C. Woods, “Akkadian and Eblaite,” *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (ed. R. D. Woodard; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 218: “connected Akkadian texts appear c. 2350.” The latter date is the conventional date for Sargon’s accession. We are speaking here of texts consisting of at least one sentence—not individual Semitic words or names written syllabically in Sumerian texts and not texts written entirely with Sumerograms.

Palace G (Mardikh IIB1), only a few steps away from a courtyard in which the lid of an alabaster jar with the titles of Pepy I (third king of the Sixth Dynasty) was discovered.<sup>29</sup> The lid, manufactured during the first thirty years of Pepy's reign, establishes a synchronism between Egypt, Syria, and Babylonia: "If one only presumes, in a totally reasonable way, that at the time of the destruction of the Palace G of Mardikh IIB1, Pepy I's lid had not been kept at Ebla for a very long time, one may infer that Sargon of Akkad, Pepy I of Egypt, and Ibbi-Zikir of Ebla were contemporaries."<sup>30</sup> More precisely, the lid "presumably reached Ebla during the period of minister Ibbi-zikir, whose seventeen years," ending with the fall of Ebla, "overlapped with the first period of Sargon's reign."<sup>31</sup> If so, the first connected Akkadian texts and some of the Eblaite texts are from the time of Pepy I. Since the archives of Ebla cover the last four decades prior to its destruction<sup>32</sup> and since the accession of Unas was three to six decades before that of Pepy I, it is not impossible that the earliest Eblaite texts (which seem to be older than the earliest Sargonic texts)<sup>33</sup> go back to the beginning of Unas's reign (assuming that Pepy I sent his lid to Ebla near the beginning of his reign and that it reached Ebla shortly before it was destroyed). However, even those earliest Eblaite texts are

<sup>29</sup> P. Matthiae, "Tell Mardikh: Ancient Ebla," *American Journal of Archaeology* 82 (1978) 540–42; A. Archi, "The Head of Kura—the Head of 'Adabal," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64 (2005) 92–94. See also chapter 1, n. 50 above.

<sup>30</sup> P. Matthiae, "The Destruction of Ebla Royal Palace: Interconnections between Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt in the Late EB IVA," in *High, Middle or Low? Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology held at the University of Gothenburg 20th–22nd August 1987* (ed. P. Åström; 3 vols.; Gothenburg: P. Åström, 1987–89) 3:166. Cf. Archi, "Head of Kura," 94: "the lid of a vase in alabaster with the titles of Pepi I, . . . , a contemporary of the last king of Ebla." Contrast the view expressed earlier in Matthiae, "Tell Mardikh," 540.

<sup>31</sup> A. Archi and M. G. Biga, "A Victory over Mari and the Fall of Ebla," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 55 (2003) 35. Cf. already J. Boese, "Zur absoluten Chronologie der Akkad-Zeit," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 74 (1982) 53: "das Ende der fruhdynastischen Zeit kann nicht vor Pepi I. angesetzt werden." Boese (pp. 52–54) dates the accession of Sargon to ca. 2250 (or shortly afterward) on the assumption that the first thirty years of Pepy's reign were between ca. 2270 and 2240 B.C.E.

<sup>32</sup> Archi and Biga, "Victory," 6–7.

<sup>33</sup> See the literature cited by M. C. Astour, "Toponymy of Ebla and Ethnohistory of Northern Syria: A Preliminary Survey," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988) 546 n. 2 (I. J. Gelb, E. Sollberger, D. O. Edzard, and E. Lipiński) and add Archi and Biga, "Victory," 30; and S. Mazzoni, "Ebla: Crafts and Power in an Emergent State of Third Millennium BC Syria," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 16 (2003) 178.

later than the Pyramid Texts, which most scholars believe were composed more than a century before the accession of Unas.<sup>34</sup>

It is now clear that the practice of writing Semitic texts with Egyptian hieroglyphs began long before the appearance of texts written in the Semitic alphabet.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, there may well be some connection between the two types of texts, since it is generally assumed that the inventor of the alphabet was strongly influenced by the Egyptian writing system.<sup>36</sup> This assumption is strengthened by the discovery that our spells, like later Semitic texts, are written mainly with monoconsonantal signs, which constitute an alphabet-like subset of the system, and without determinatives. It is to be hoped that other early Semitic texts will be discovered “hiding in plain sight” elsewhere in the Pyramid Texts or in other early Egyptian inscriptions.

### תומשׁ בְּעַל

<sup>34</sup> See at chapter 1, nn. 2–10 above.

<sup>35</sup> For an attempt to date the Semitic alphabet on paleographic grounds, see J. C. Darnell, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, M. J. Lundberg, P. K. McCarter, and B. Zuckerman, “Two Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from the Wadi el-Hôl: New Evidence for the Origin of the Alphabet from the Western Desert of Egypt,” *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 59 (2005) 90. (I am indebted to A. Gianto for reminding me of this discovery.) For an attempt to date the Byblos syllabary on paleographic grounds, see J. E. Hoch, “The Byblos Syllabary: Bridging the Gap Between Egyptian Hieroglyphs and Semitic Alphabets,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 20 (1990) 118–19. It would be instructive to compare the Byblos syllabary with the script of the Old Kingdom cylinder seal from Byblos; see chapter 1, n. 66 above.

<sup>36</sup> So A. Demsky (e-mail communication, January 24, 2007); G. J. Hamilton, *The Origins of the West Semitic Alphabet in Egyptian Scripts* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 40; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Bible Association of America, 2006); O. Goldwasser, “Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Horus is Hathor? The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai,” *Ägypten und Levante* 16 (2006) 132–50; and, more tentatively, B. Sass, *Studia Alphabetica: On the Origin and Early History of the Northwest Semitic, South Semitic and Greek Alphabets* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 25–27. Cf. already Tacitus, *The Annals and the Histories* (trans. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb; ed. M. Hadas; New York: Modern Library, 1942) 202 (11.14): “It was the Egyptians who first symbolized ideas, and that by the figures of animals. These records, the most ancient of all human history, are still seen engraved on stone. The Egyptians also claim to have invented the alphabet, which the Phoenicians, they say, by means of their superior seamanship, introduced into Greece, and of which they appropriated the glory, giving out that they had discovered what they had really been taught.” For other classical sources, see E. de Rougé, *Mémoire sur l'origine égyptienne de l'alphabet phénicien* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1874) 2.

## Appendix: *ȝȝȝ* or *tiw*?

The signs that R. K. Ritner read as *ȝȝȝ* are read *tiw/tyw* by C. Leitz.<sup>1</sup> I reproduce here an e-mail communication from Ritner, dated September 30, 2002, which explains his reading:

The first, and perhaps most important problem is to establish the reading of the *ȝȝȝ* series . . . that appears in Spells 232, 235, 281, 286, 386 and 728. Sethe has an extended note on this group in his commentary on Spell 232 (pp. 207–08 of Kommentar), in which he notes that the form looks in 232 like *ȝȝȝ* (three birds = Gardiner G1), but in the Middle Kingdom (I assume that he is referring to the Coffin Texts, which are descended from the Pyramid Texts) the group is written as (the very similar) *tyw* (Gardiner G4, which has a more rounded head), with the triple writing giving the plural *w* sound, reinforcing the final *w* of *tyw*. On that logic, I assume that he must have imagined that if *ȝȝȝ* were ever correct, it should also be read *ȝw* (three birds for *ȝ* + plural ending). Sethe notes that the series in 281 is clearly *tyw* (all rounded heads), and he assumes that the writing of *ti ti . . . ti* in Spell 236 is a phonetic vocalization of the three birds. However, there are serious problems with simply assuming a reading of *tyw*. I have examined the photos of the Unas exemplars, and it is apparent that the sculptors were not consistent in the carving of these birds—not only from spell to spell, but within the series in individual spells. Thus, in Spell 232, the Unas photo (Piankoff, plate 69) shows round head, flat head and round head. Spell 235 has all flat heads (plate 69), 281 has all round heads (plate 32), and Spell 286 has again all flat heads (plate 31). Unas doesn't have 386, but Teti has round heads, and in 281, where Unas had 6 round heads (two groups of three birds), Teti has two round and four flat! In Spell 728, Pepi II has three flat heads.

What is to be made of this? My PT graduate student (Harold Hays) and I agree that the lack of consistency is good evidence that the passage is in a non-Egyptian language and was thus unclear to the copyists. Coffin Text Spell 885 (= CT VII, 95c) does have three clear *tyw*-birds + *nn* + *mwt=f* + snake determinative for the combination *tyw-nn-mwt.f* in a series of differently named snakes, but as

<sup>1</sup> C. Leitz, “Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidentexten,” *Orientalia N.S.* 65 (1996) 405, 407, 414–15, 418; cf. K. Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (6 vols.; Hamburg: J. J. Augustin, 1935–62) 1:207–8.

Faulkner notes in his translation, these sections are strung together from a variety of old sources and often garbled. He considers 95c-d untranslatable, with the *nn-mwt=f* part from Spell 287 (*nn n mwt=f . . .*). In sum, the CT example is untrustworthy and adds little that is compelling. The Middle Kingdom versions may have settled on *tyw* for the Coffin Texts, but that does not necessarily mean that the *tyw* reading is either primary or correct. In Egyptian, *tyw* isn't any more meaningful here than *ȝȝȝ* or *ȝw*, so we should be looking for whatever produces the best sense. I also don't believe that the text of 236 has *ti* three times for *tyw*, since *bi* intrudes between the last two writings of *ti*: *hi ti ti bi ti*.

It is worth adding that confusion between G1 and G4 seems to be rare in the Pyramid Texts outside of the three bird sequence. There are no examples in Sethe's list of *Zeichenverwechslungen*,<sup>2</sup> and only one example has been noted by Mathieu.<sup>3</sup> Without Ritner's explanation, this fact is difficult to understand, since one would normally expect confusion between G1 and G4 to be far *less* common in a G1-G1-G1 sequence or a G4-G4-G4 sequence than in other environments. The fact that it is far *more* common (expressed as a percentage of the total number of occurrences) in the three-bird sequence, despite the stabilizing effect of the repetition, is strong evidence for Ritner's explanation.

<sup>2</sup> K. Sethe, *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908–22) 4:125–27.

<sup>3</sup> B. Mathieu, “La distinction entre Textes des Pyramides et Textes des Sarcophages est-elle légitime?” in *D'un monde à l'autre: Textes des Pyramides & Textes des Sarcophages. Actes de la table ronde internationale, “Textes des Pyramides versus Textes des Sarcophages,” Ifao, 24–26 septembre 2001* (ed. S. Bickel and B. Mathieu; Bibliothèque d'étude 139; Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2004) 251.

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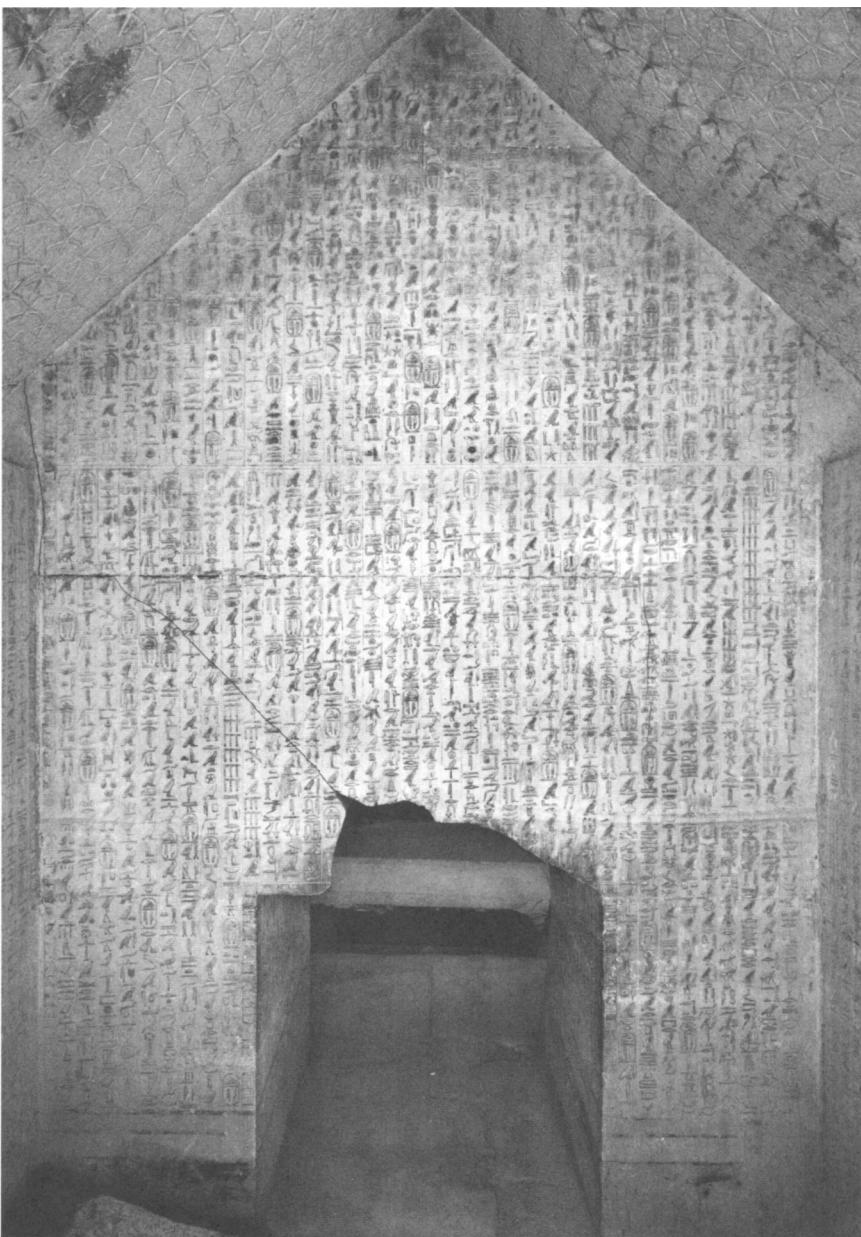
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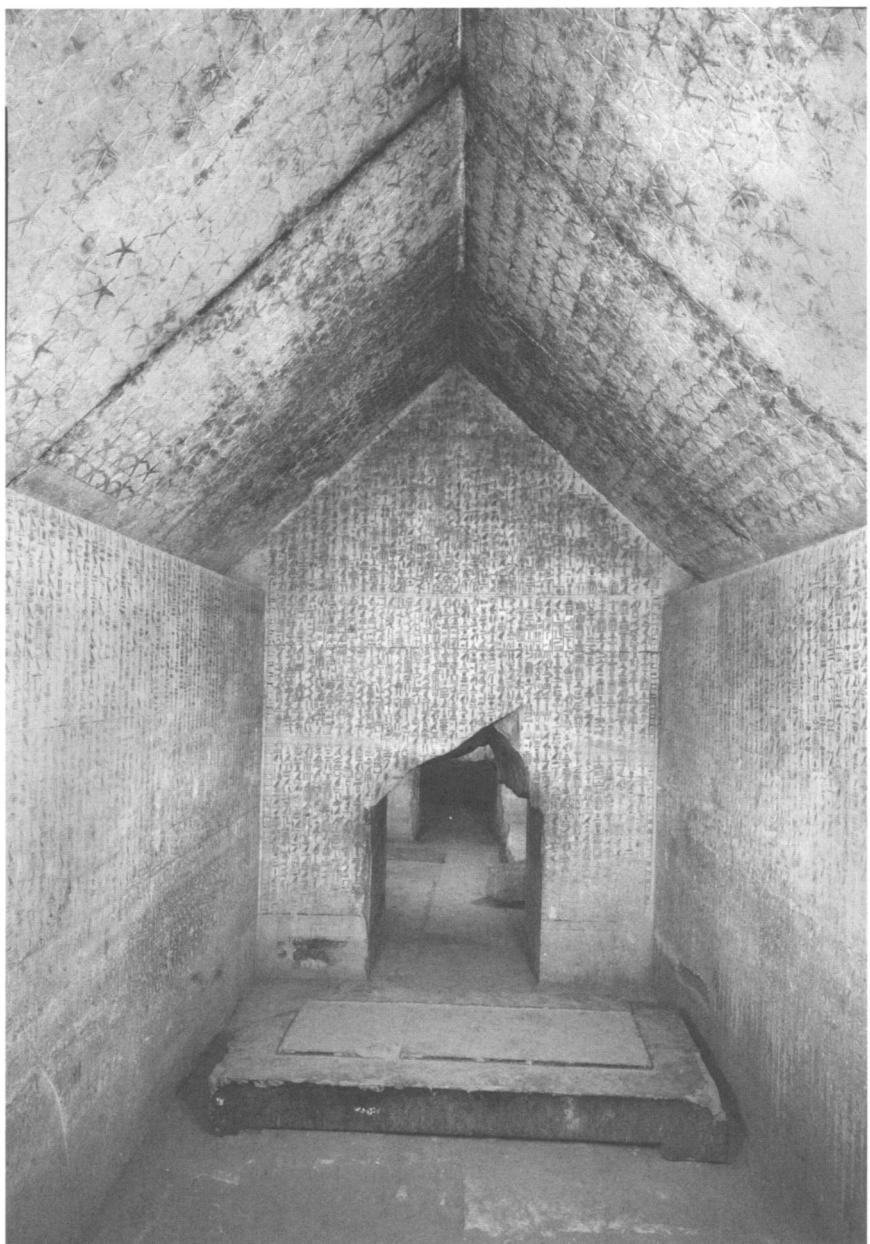
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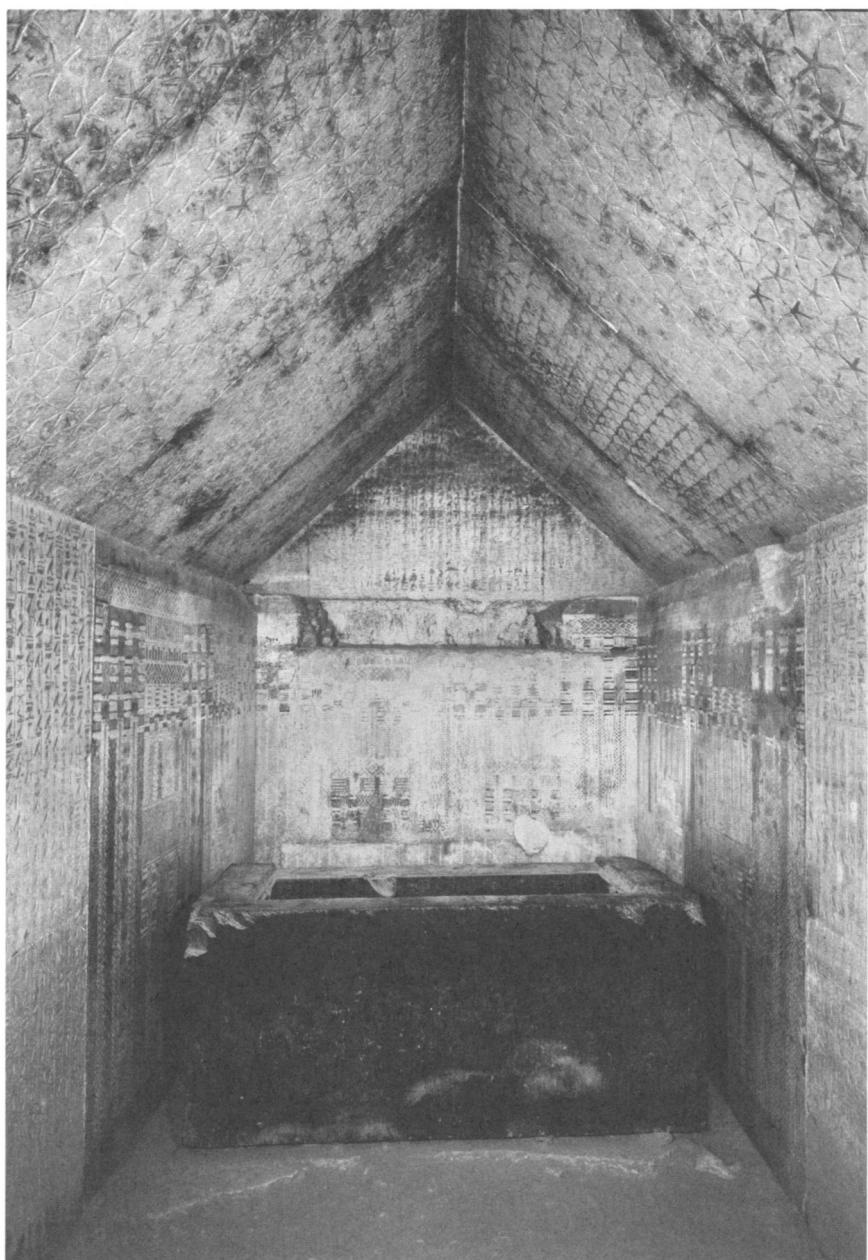
1. The Pyramid of Unas: Antechamber, North Wall (right) and West Wall.



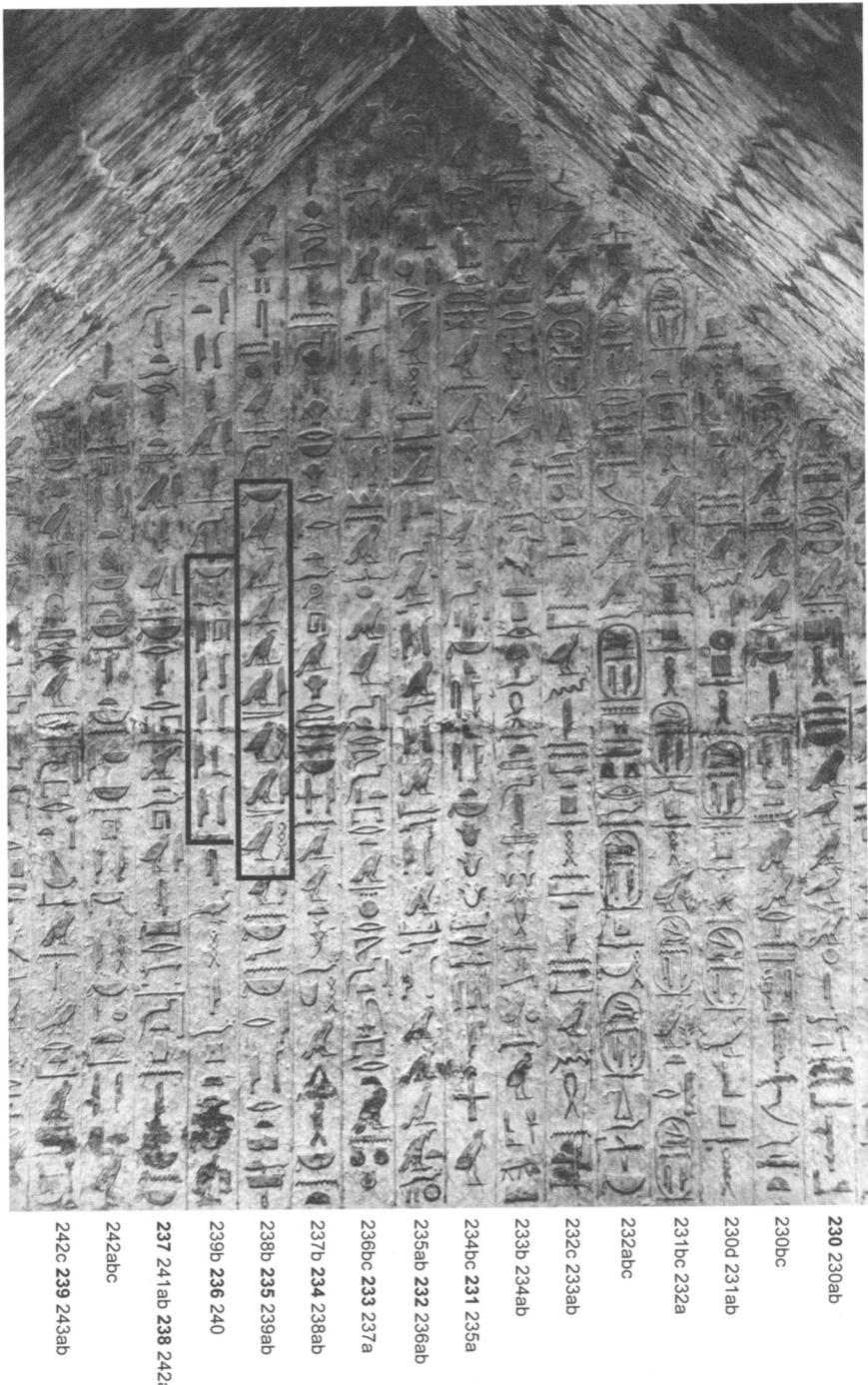
2. The Pyramid of Unas: Antechamber, West Wall, with top of entrance to sarcophagus chamber broken by grave robbers.



3. The Pyramid of Unas: Sarcophagus Chamber, East Wall, with sarcophagus lid lying on floor.



4. The Pyramid of Unas: Sarcophagus Chamber, West Wall. The first series of snake spells is carved into the gable above the sarcophagus (see p. 107).



5. Sarcophagus Chamber: West Gable, center, with Semitic utterances of the mother snake (see p. 108).



Detail B



Detail A

6. Detail A: "Utterance of *Rīr-Rīr*, Mother-Snake, Mother-Snake."  
Detail B: "His spell: 'Come, come to my house.'"

277 418ab 278 419a

419c 279 420a

280 421ab

[281] 422bc

[282] 423abc

283 424ab 284 425a

[284] 425cde 285 426a

[285] 426bcd

[286] 427abc

[287] 428ab 288 429a

429c 289 430ab 290 431a

[290] 431ab 291 432a  
.....



7. Antechamber: East Wall, upper.



8. Antechamber: East Wall, lower.